

Sight and Sound

VIOLENT CINEMA: mind-numbing critics
ROMANCING THE GLENS: 'Rob Roy'
AFTER MURIEL: new Australian cinema
POSSESSION: scanning 'The X-Files'



MARTIN SCORSESE:

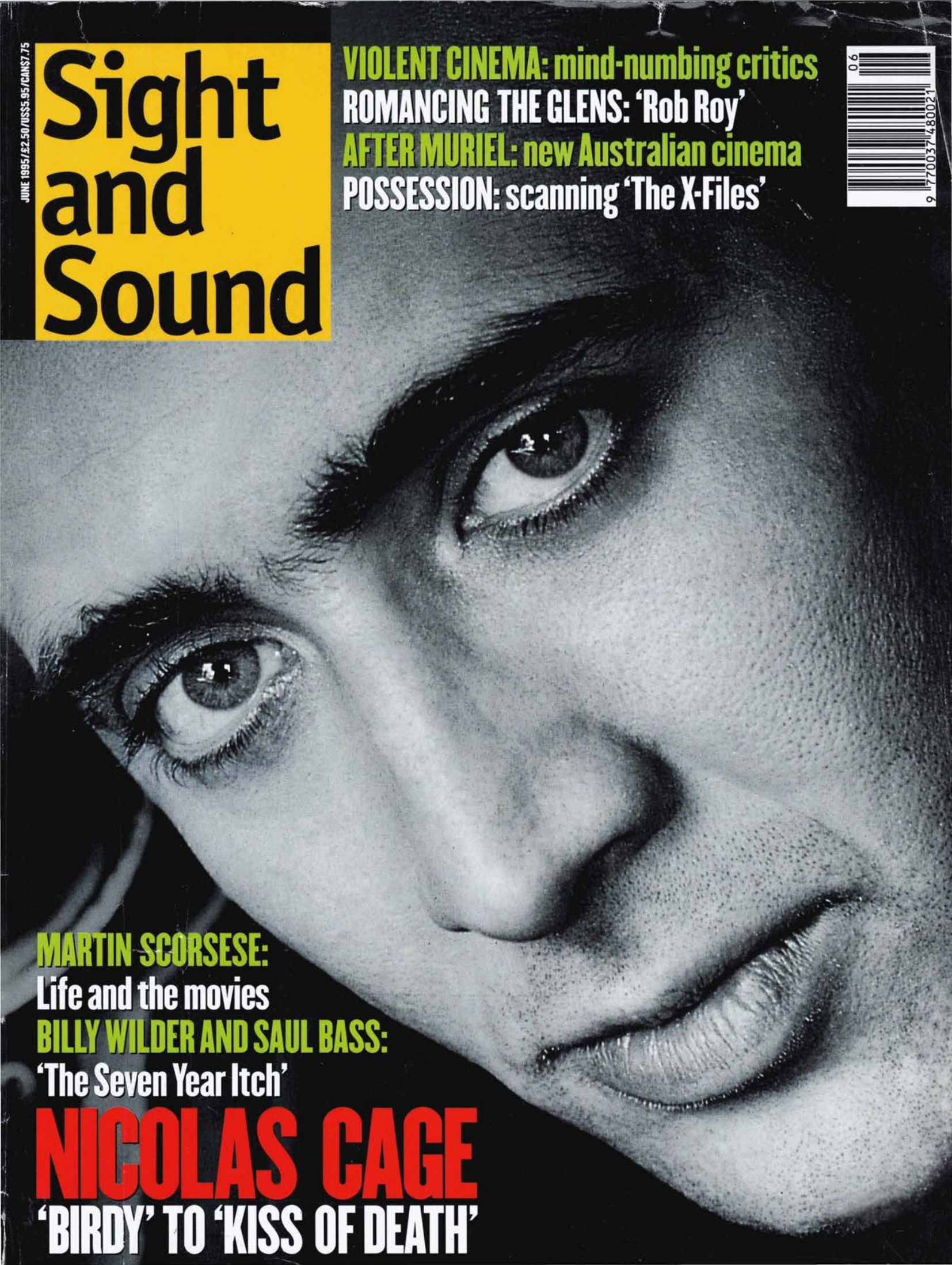
Life and the movies

BILLY WILDER AND SAUL BASS:

'The Seven Year Itch'

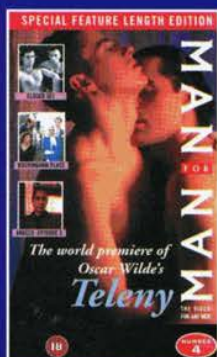
NICOLAS CAGE

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MAN *for* MAN

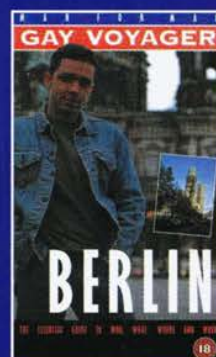


AN EROTIC VIDEO SPECTACULAR

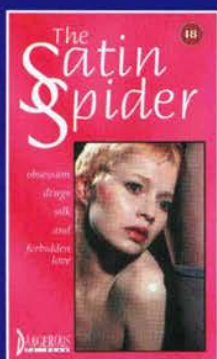
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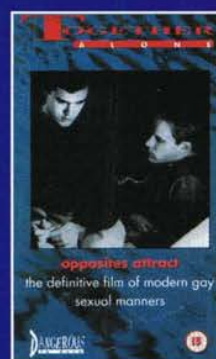
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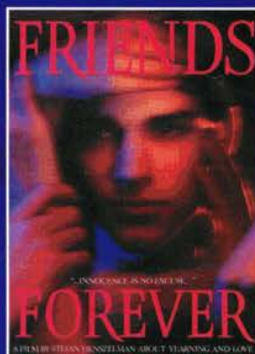
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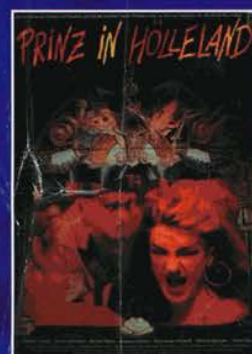
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June 1995



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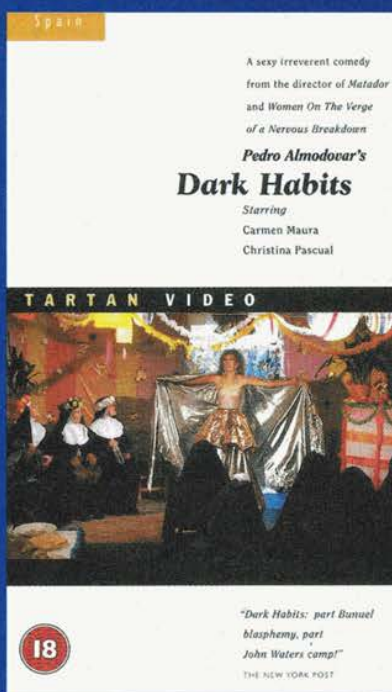
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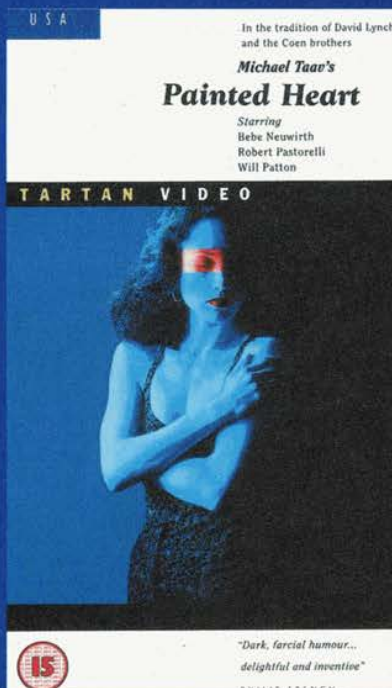
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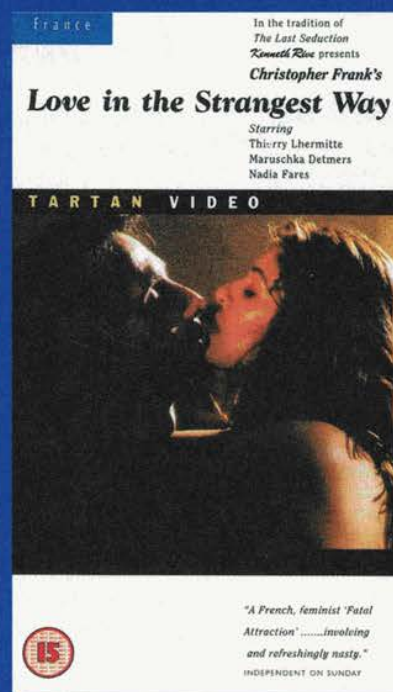
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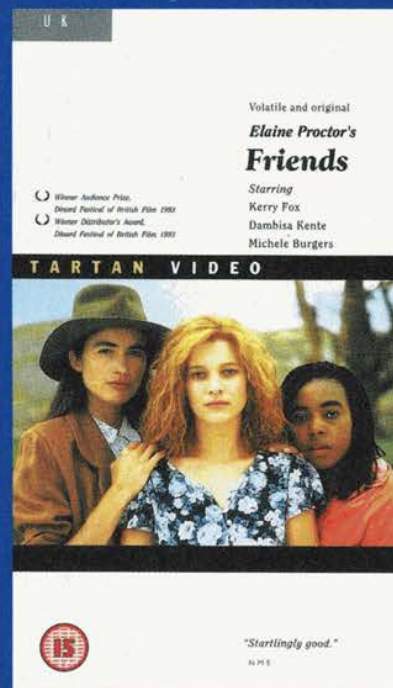
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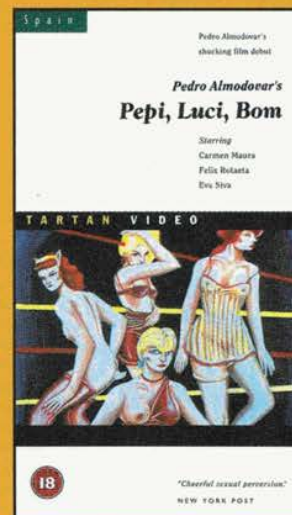
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"Delicious... seals Almodovar as one of cinema's twisted geniuses"
NEW YORK NEWSDAY

From Spain's master of the bizarre and the outrageous, Pedro Almodovar's hilarious and shocking film debut starring the flamboyant Carmen Maura, normally priced at £15.99 but available to Sight & Sound readers for the special price of only

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Technophobia

Contributors to this issue

Martin Barker's books include accounts of 'video nasties', the moral panic around comics in the 50s and the forthcoming *The Lasting of the Mohicans*. **Manohla Dargis** is the film editor and chief movie writer of the *LA Weekly*. **Raymond Durnat** is Professor at University of East London and author of many books on cinema. He is working on a study of Michael Powell.

Richard Falcon is a BBFC examiner.

A. L. Kennedy's novel *So I Am Glad* is published by Jonathan Cape on 11 June.

Pat Kirkham is Professor at De Montfort University and has written widely on design. She is completing a work on Charles Eames.

Liz Lochhead is a poet, playwright and screenwriter. Her stage play *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* was first produced by Communicado Theatre Company, Edinburgh Festival 1987, and is published by Penguin Books.

Geoffrey Macnab is the author of a study of Rank studios.

Adrian Martin's writings on film have recently been collected as *Phantasms*.

Tony Rayns recently curated the season of Korean cinema at the ICA.

Jonathan Ross is a television presenter and writer.

Forbidden Cinema, which we publish this month, and which complements the forthcoming BBC2 *Forbidden Weekend* as well as censorship debates around the country, is a reminder that film has agitated, confused and frightened politicians and the powerful from its earliest days. The fuss over such films as *Natural Born Killers* and *Reservoir Dogs* is only one of many instalments in a long running saga in which film is held responsible for all kinds of social ills. (*Reservoir Dogs* recently slipped out onto video without the expected uproar; probably only because the BBFC announced its release at Easter, when newsdesks are not on the lookout for 'moral panic' stories.)

As this attention given to cinema and censorship follows hard on the Labour Party victories in the local elections, seemingly predicting a Labour victory at the next General Election, it may be worth reflecting just how 'New' Labour is planning to set about re-imagining the State's control over what we are allowed to see in the cinema and on video.

The sad truth is that 'New' Labour has so far had nothing 'new' to say about such matters. Or rather what it has to say is sadly familiar. After all, before he became leader of the Labour Party, it was Tony Blair who brokered the deal that turned the 'Alton amendment' into what became part of the recent Criminal Justice Act, further restricting the availability of film on video. Two things are depressing about Blair's action. First, rumour has it that he cooked up the Criminal Justice Act amendment with the BBFC; if true, then he is simply behaving as politicians have always behaved, working out with their expert advisors behind closed doors what ought to be done, and then presenting it to Parliament. Even if this is a 'great British tradition', it is still rather disappointing to find Blair not showing the same scepticism towards the experts at the BBFC as he does towards other experts: think of teachers.

The other reason why his action is depressing is that it suggests that for all his genuine achievements in modernising the Labour Party he remains trapped by its Methodist moral agenda – an agenda suspicious of new technological developments, which are regarded as the bearers of uncomfortable social and moral changes. As recently as 1977, a Labour Party document,

Arts and the People, failed even to mention recorded music, television and radio, limiting its arguments to more traditional forms of art. Outwardly, all this has now changed, at least: the new Labour party now hymns its devotion to superhighways and the democratisation that the new technologies bring in their wake. But Blair's contribution to the Criminal Justice Act suggests otherwise. He remains anxious about secular and popular pleasures.

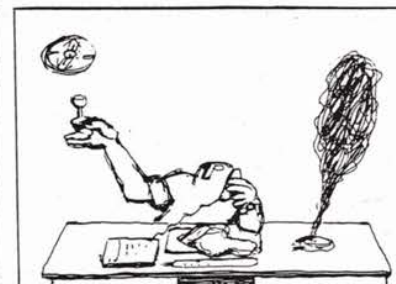
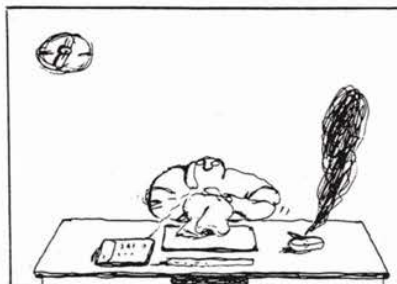
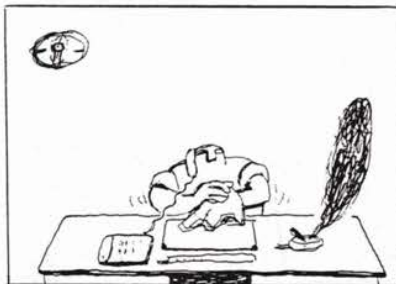
This isn't to say (and this magazine has never said) that questions of regulation do not matter. They do. The question is: do the old models of regulation and guardianship still hold? There is the matter of the competence of the old solutions, with burgeoning satellite and cable technology soon to make a mockery of the national boundaries within which censorship traditionally functions. Then there's the matter of EC membership, likely sooner or later to mean that Britain brings itself into line with its continental neighbours on the free flow of goods and information. There's even the matter of the thriving black market in videos, which increasingly makes a mockery of the regulations (not to mention serious money for those who peddle them: pirated videos of *Natural Born Killers* were on sale in London before the film had even opened).

But the most important consideration is this. The generation who will come to adulthood and have children themselves soon after the beginning of the next century *don't* think of these new electronic technologies as alien, threatening or corrupting, as Methodist Labour does. They think of these technologies as their own; they don't wish to see them stigmatised.

Politicians will have to listen to what this new adult generation says and at least in part form policies that speak their language. Reading *Forbidden Cinema* makes us all aware that the twentieth century has been the century not of the common man (nor the common woman) but of the expert. If the Labour Party is serious about its democratic agenda it might begin by starting a dialogue with this next generation, rather than huddling in corners with experts. Of course it may be that this next generation will be as censorious as Tony Blair seems to be. It would be salutary to find out.

JERRY ON LINE #1

James Sillavan – Peter Lydon ©



'Jerry, before you leave Cannes get some of that dark French chocolate. Oh, a couple of bottles of local red wine & some coarse country paté wouldn't go amiss & if you see any gentle romantic comedies that we can niche market in urban centres, get one of those as well.'

The business

● At the turn of the decade, acres of press comment – most of it distinctly chauvinistic in nature – was generated, first by Japanese property companies buying up most of Los Angeles, then by the Japanese takeover of Hollywood. The words “Pearl Harbour” even crept into a few headlines, and Michael Crichton got a rather nasty little novel out of it all.

So why has the reverse process – the recent bail-out by the same Japanese buyers of as many high-profile late 80s or early 90s purchases as possible – not attracted the same kind of coverage?

The answer is that the Japanese mostly lost their shirts. And, while leader writers and pulp novelists can raise a few hackles by invoking the image of a yellow tide engulfing the orange groves, the idea that the new owners found their purchases over-priced, inefficient and not worth keeping is a bit less flattering to Angeleno sense of self-esteem.

In the same week that a Japanese company put the Bel Air Hotel on the market, the Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. – which purchased Universal Pictures’ parent company MCA Inc., for \$6.59 billion at the end of December 1990 – finally went public after months of rumour and announced it was selling off an 80 per cent stake in the business to Canadian conglomerate Seagram, purveyors of wine, spirits (Chivas Regal, Captain Morgan rum and their own brand whisky), fruit juices and petroleum (Texas Pacific Oil).

To the surprise of many, Matsushita adopted an apparently hands-off approach as far as MCA was concerned, leaving the day-to-day running of the company very much to chairman Lew Wasserman and president Sid Sheinberg. But they have reportedly been unhappy for some time with the company’s performance (Universal finished fourth among the major studios last year, with a 12.5 per cent share of the annual box office), and

can’t have been exactly delighted when its one surefire alliance – with Steven Spielberg’s Amblin Entertainment – fell apart as Spielberg set up DreamWorks with David Geffen and Jeffrey Katzenberg last autumn.

The prospect of the \$175 million *Waterworld*, which Universal is due to open in the US at the end of July, can’t have helped, either, especially since MCA “wrote down” (i.e. wrote off) the film’s production costs for tax purposes in mid-April – not an unusual move, apparently, but one which does not suggest 100 per cent confidence in the Kevin Costner epic.

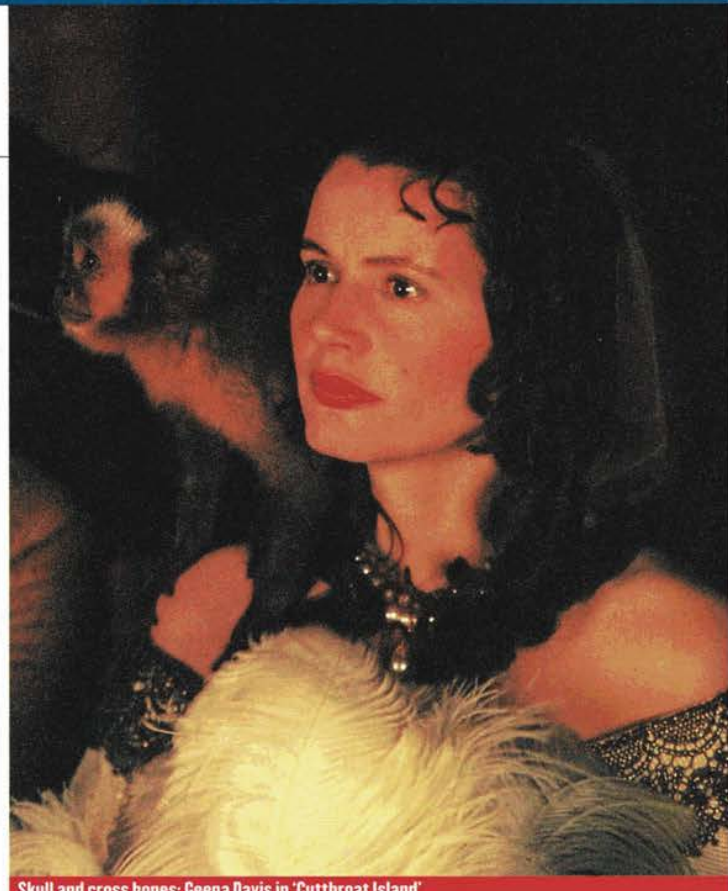
Some people still believe that Los Angeles is worth having, however: the Sultan of Brunei still owns the Beverly Hills Hotel.

It was to have been David Lean’s last film, an epic to rival *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Doctor Zhivago*. Now it’s a TV mini-series. I’m talking, of course, about *Nostromo*, the project in pre-production at Nice’s Studios de la Victorine just before Lean’s death and at one stage due to become that rarity in the world of cinema, a Hugh Hudson film.

The Hudson plan went as quickly as it came, but Italian producer Fernando Chia never gave up, and has finally managed to put *Nostromo* together as a four-part, six-hour series for Italian state broadcaster RAI and the BBC. Shooting was due to start last month on the Caribbean coast of Colombia, with Albert Finney and Claudia Cardinale starring, and British TV director Alastair Reid at the helm.

● Anyone who remembers the massive, beach-front presence that French distributor AAA used to mount in Cannes will doubtless be surprised to hear that the company, once the most dynamic and successful of French indies, has gone bankrupt with reported debts of Ffr 30 (£4) million.

A decade ago, during the 1985-86 release season, AAA was the number one distributor in France, pushing aside even the US majors thanks to such homegrown films as *3 hommes et un couffin* (*Three Men and a Cradle*), which started that whole business



Skull and cross bones: Geena Davis in *Cutthroat Island*

with Tom Selleck and the nappies, and Bertrand Blier’s *Tenue de soirée*.

Business has been bad in recent years, however, and, despite a partial takeover by a Canadian company and rumours of a financial restructuring at the end of last year, AAA finally went down the tube at the end of February.

Speaking of an absence in Cannes, the time serious questions about Sean Penn’s second movie as a director, *The Crossing Guard*, which (a usually impeccable source told *Mr Busy* in February) was all set to compete on the Croisette last month, with star Jack Nicholson tagging along to give it a bit of glitz. Maybe Jack decided to stay home. *The Crossing Guard* certainly did, making Cannes the second major festival in a row at which the film was expected but hasn’t shown (the first being Venice 1994).

The story of a man who is destroyed by the death of his son and sets out to exact revenge, the film went into production for Miramax on 12 January 1994, teaming Nicholson with former partner Anjelica Huston for the first time since they split up. Indeed, it was rumoured to have been the first time they had spoken to one another since the break. Fittingly, Huston played Nicholson’s ex-wife.

Since it wrapped last spring, there has been a constant buzz about the film, some of it – including a paean of praise from Marlon Brando reported through Brando’s regular means of communicating with the outside world (Army Archerd’s *Just for Variety* column in *Daily Variety*) – giving the distinct impression of having been orchestrated. Even an announcement in February that Bruce Springsteen was doing the music seems to have brought the film no nearer. For the moment, the official word is that it will be released in the US this autumn.

● Which is also now the case with Renny Harlin’s pirate epic, *Cutthroat Island*, starring Harlin’s wife Geena Davis as Morgan Adams, scourge of the Caribbean coast.

In another carefully arranged chat, Harlin told the aforementioned Mr Archerd over the phone from Phuket, Thailand, that he was used to tight post-production schedules and would have the film in US movie theatres in time for the 4 July weekend.

A couple of weeks later, the opening was rescheduled for 21 July. Then in April came the news it would not be ready until much later in the year.

This does seem to suggest that Carolco – the event-movie specialist headed by flamboyant Hungarian Mario Kassar – is having a few problems with the \$80-million-plus film, including the enormous difficulty finding a co-star for Davis (Michael Douglas dropped out and was replaced, after months of speculation about Keanu Reeves, by the not-exactly-stellar Matthew Modine) and even greater difficulty securing completion-bond insurance (shooting actually started without one in place).

But those problems pale into insignificance alongside the corporate crisis through which Carolco itself is now going, partly because of the postponement of this same opening. On 17 April, Carolco announced it was on the verge of applying for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection and that it was unable to meet either interest payments (on, among other things, the money raised to make *Cutthroat Island*) or operating expenses.

Of course Carolco – whose recent cash cows include *Basic Instinct*, *Total*



Set to take a bath: Kevin Costner in *Waterworld*

Recall, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* and *Cliffhanger* – has been there before, and has usually managed to draw in extra cash from backers such as Japan's Victor Company, Canal + or French conglomerate Chargeurs.

But most of the latter have now said enough, and the company earlier this year failed to meet mortgage payments on its rather nice Sunset Boulevard headquarters, thus losing the lease and a lot of money, too. It has had to sell off two recent moneyspinners – *Stargate* and the upcoming Paul Verhoeven movie *Showgirls* – to generate cash.

Not that there appears to be any shortage of the latter to pay Kassas, who has a base salary of \$2.4 million per annum and collected \$1.2 million in bonuses and \$1.9 million in other fees, according to the recently published accounts.

You have to admire the guy's chutzpah. The same day all this became public, Carolco took a double-page ad in the trades, an image of a skull and crossed cutlasses in silver against an all-black background and just the words "Principal Photography Now Completed".

That's how you create event movies: you make them so famous you don't have to mention their names. Well, actually, the name is there, sort of – in tiny print at the bottom of the page, the image is copyrighted to 'Cutthroat Productions L.P.'

Don't you just bet that company has its registered office in the same part of the world where Morgan Adams used to ply her trade?

You thrilled to her skills at staging musicals in 'Golden Eighties'. Now get ready for the first English-language romantic comedy from Belgian director Chantal Akerman.

It is called, somewhat enigmatically, 'A Couch in New York'; it stars William Hurt and Juliette Binoche; and it was mainly shot at the Babelsberg Studios outside Berlin, with some location work in Paris and New York itself. Hurt plays a New York psychiatrist, Binoche a Parisian dancer. They swap apartments, then get caught up in each other's lives.

● Who would have expected S&S – still less this column – to have included a favourable comment on Rupert Murdoch, the well-known American citizen. But Mr Busy feels he must give full backing to the Dirty Digger's recent suggestion – at the National Association of Broadcasters convention in Las Vegas on 10 April – that US TV networks should give free space to politicians who, he claimed, spent 95 per cent of their funds on the box.

Murdoch cited the practice in other countries – including the UK – where political advertising, at any rate in the form of Party Political Broadcasts, is free. NAB members weren't bowled over by Rupert's suggestion, however, since they netted \$355 million in TV spots in 1994. They also pointed out

that Mr Murdoch's Fox Network gets much less of it than the other three.

A t last one of America's best and most unusual comic talents is being rescued from the limbo of cable television and doing voices in 'Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas'. I refer, of course, to the inimitable Pee Wee Herman, who has been ostracised by the US entertainment industry ever since he was arrested for quietly masturbating in a Florida porno cinema.

The name "Pee Wee" seems to be gone for good, and the actor now almost works under his real name (Paul Reubens for Reubenfeld). So far, Reubens has only done cameos

(in 'Batman Returns'), small roles ('Buffy The Vampire Slayer'), voices ('Nightmare') and guest spots (on hit US TV series 'Murphy Brown').

Now, though, he has a proper role alongside Faye Dunaway, Rupert Everett, Jason Alexander and Eric Lloyd in Ken Kwapis' family comedy, 'Dunston Checks In', which began shooting in mid-April. Reubens plays an animal control officer – a bigger role than it sounds, since the Dunston of the title is a baby orangutan.

● Finally, after films like *Point Break* and *Blue Steel* (which were more than proficient but never showed the edge

of her first two movies, *The Loveless* and *Near Dark*) Kathryn Bigelow has teamed up again with Eric Red, her co-writer on *Near Dark*. *Undertow* is a thriller which recently started shooting in Vilnius, Lithuania, and it stars Lou Diamond Phillips, Mia Sara and Charles Dance. Red (who wrote the screenplay for one of the best American films of the 80s, *The Hitcher*) directs. I'd say it should be worth waiting for but, sadly, *Undertow* is being made for US cable network Showtime. It may get a theatrical release, but don't count on it.

HONG KONG NOTES

Music and movies

April's Hong Kong Film Festival, one of the best in years, offered three knockout presentations of silent movies with live music. Programmer Li Cheuk-To screened the superb Nederlands Filmmuseum restoration of John Ford's debut feature *Straight Shooting* (1917) as part of his celebration of cinema's centenary, and made the inspired decision to have it accompanied by Hong Kong avant-garde rock band Huh...?, who alternated between Link Wray-style rumbles and Brian Eno-esque noodlings which brought the movie to life in the most unexpected way.

And Law Kar's retrospective "Early Images of Hong Kong and China" included presentations of several important Chinese films long believed lost, two of them with outstanding musical back-up. Ying Yunwei's *The Eight Hundred Heroes* (Babai Zhuangshi, 1938) is a small masterpiece of guerrilla film-making, reconstructing the defence of a warehouse in Shanghai during the Japanese invasion the year before; it was shot silent, and the festival screened it with music from a small Chinese-instrument ensemble... and with two rousing songs from a Chinese baritone, one sung in synch with an on-screen rendition of the same song. The greatest triumph, though, was a presentation of an epic Ruan Lingyu melodrama from 1931: *Love and Duty* (*Lian'ai yu yiwu*, directed by Richard Poh (Bu Wancang) is a two-and-a-half-hour *tour-de-force* about the awful price paid by a woman for abandonment of her arid arranged marriage, rich in character detail and with spectacular location sequences. It was given the best musical accompaniment I've ever heard, by the Filipino musician Ernesto Maurice Corpus.

These two unexpected revivals testify to the rapid progress being made in Chinese archival work. Ying Yunwei's film was preserved against all odds by the owner of a Hong Kong

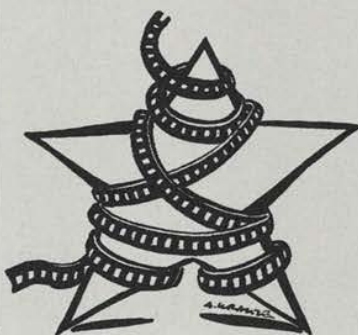
film lab, whose heirs donated the print to the recently opened Hong Kong Film Archive; it came with the first four reels of another anti-Japanese agit-prop movie made in 1938, *Protect our Country* (Bao Jiaxiang), also shown in the festival, which has real visual and dramatic intensity and establishes forgotten director He Feiguang as a cause for much further research. Richard Poh's film was found in a virtually mint, tinted print in Uruguay together with a cache of Chinese books and antiques, and has been restored by the National Film Library in Taipei. The archive in Beijing is still subject to heavy political constraints, but it seems clear that the three Chinese archives between them will be doing a lot in coming years to fill gaps in our knowledge of Chinese film history.

The most interesting of the festival's new films couldn't compete in scale or impact with these rediscoveries, but none the less offered palpable pleasures. Kutlug Ataman's *The Serpent's Tale* (Karanlik Sular, 1994) doesn't "herald the birth of a New Cinema in Turkey", as some critics have claimed, because it's a clearly bizarre one-off; a concentration of Moslem heresies and occult paradoxes with a Chinese box approach to narrative. It plays rather like a gay cousin to a Raúl Ruiz movie. Fred Kelemen's *Fate* (*Verhängnis*, 1994) is an equally unlikely candidate for

spearheading the overdue revival of German film-making, but it does announce a striking new 'voice'. Kelemen's gnarled, fibrous images follow a cast of gloomy and desperate *gastarbeiter* through a long, dark night of the soul, in extended takes, each of which charts a dramatic or psychological enigma; the effect is authentically disturbing.

The best of the new Chinese work stands on solid ground. Ivan Chen (Chen Yiwen), former assistant to Edward Yang, has made an engrossing 40-minute tape called *Scenes of Violence* (*Baoli Jishi Lu*, 1994, already an award-winner in Taiwan), in which a callow woman journalist interviews a teenage criminal, unthinkingly committing as much violence on him as he commits on his victims. Beijing's 'underground' superstar Zhang Yuan has defied the government's blacklist by making a feature-length documentary about life in Tiananmen Square, the most public space in the whole of China. *The Square* (*Guangchang*, 1994, co-directed with Duan Jinchuan) has nuances and significant omissions that will be lost on viewers beyond Beijing, but it stands up well enough simply as an observational documentary of a kind rarely made in China.

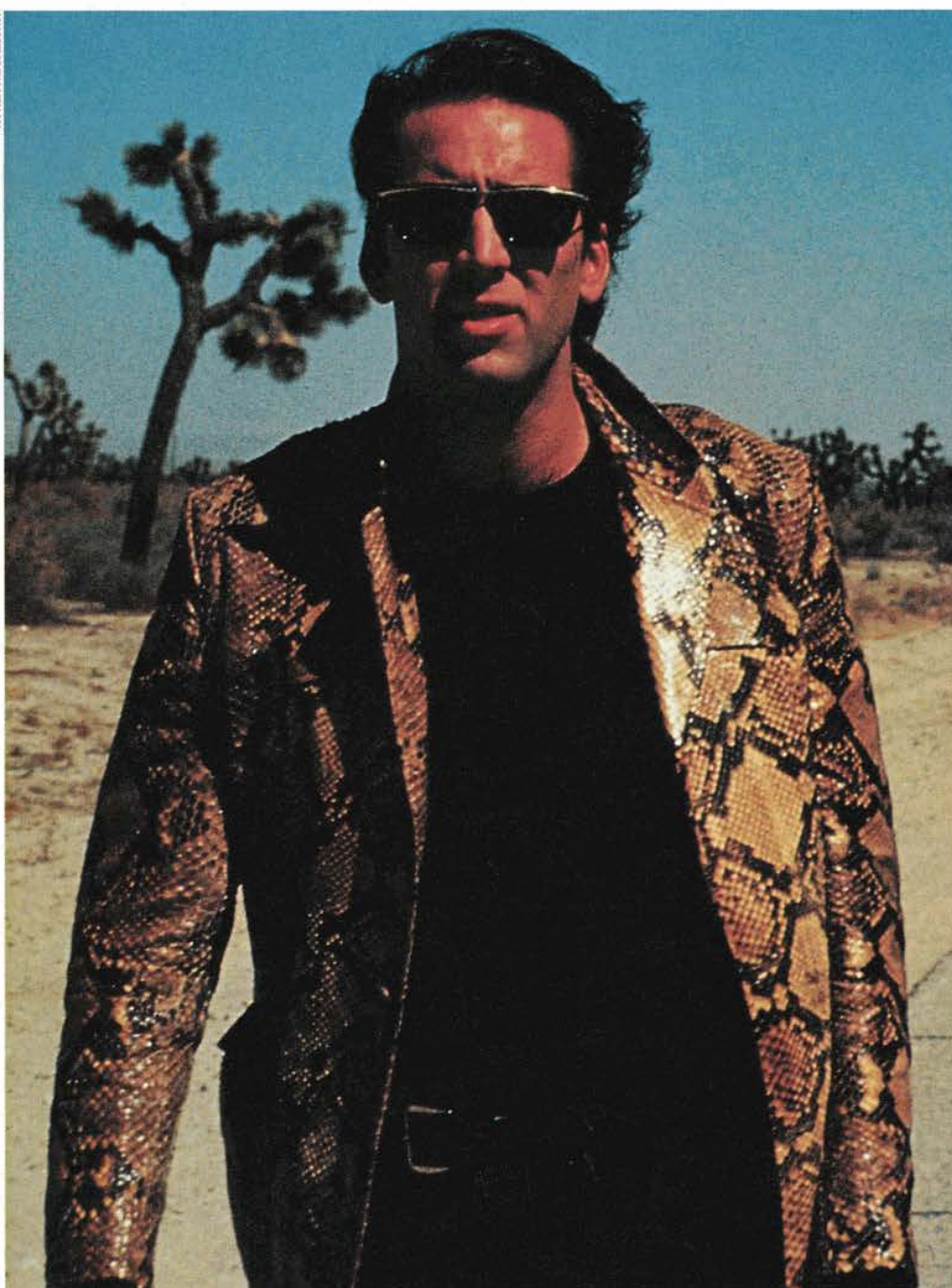
And Chang's fellow blacklisted He Jianjun (aka He Yi) has made the finest and most provocative Chinese film of the year with *Postman* (*Youchai*, 1995), no doubt the first Chinese film ever to tackle privacy as an issue. It centres on a young postal worker who steals letters on his mail round and starts interfering in the lives of the intended recipients, who include a prostitute and a gay junkie; meanwhile the boy's own life falls apart when he succumbs to the long dormant impulse to sleep with his sister. The film chronicles seven varieties of misery, but does so with a spiritual luminescence that transcends despair to reach a plane of extraordinary beauty. Tony Rayns



METHOD AND MADNESS

"Legendary", they've called Nicolas Cage's performance in the new 'Kiss of Death'. Is he worth such praise? Or is he still in Brando's shadow? By Manohla Dargis

MOVIESTORE COLLECTION



● Is Nicolas Cage the greatest American actor? It may seem rhetorical but the question is sincere. Nine years ago in *The New Yorker*, Pauline Kael began her review of the mildly interesting *Street Smart* by posing the same question about Morgan Freeman, a supporting player. Kael, retired now, never shied from hyperbole; since that film's star was the pallid Christopher Reeve, an enthusiasm for Freeman is understandable. Freeman is also retired after a fashion, having settled into the role of Older Dignified Negro, the position held previously by Sidney Poitier and James Earl Jones before the first became irrelevant and the second declined into self-parody.

For his part, Nicolas Cage has almost always been irrelevant, at least as far as Hollywood goes, and his presence in front of the camera has invariably approached self-parody. That speaks volumes about what it means to be a contemporary movie actor, when stardom remains the prerogative of few but the will to celebrity consumes so many. It also says a great deal about Cage. Freed from the burden of race (and gender), Cage has in the last 12 years made a vocation out of being a wild card. Neither star exactly nor character actor, but somewhere in between, he's made his reputation on the off-beat, taking on comedies and dramas, the extreme mainstream and the most unconstrained of independent film; he shifts gears from unlikely romantic ideal to unspeakable geek, often in the very same movie.

The issue of Cage's greatness as a movie actor has occupied his fans for some time. Now with the release of *Kiss of Death* the rest of the world seems to have caught on. Directed by Barbet Schroeder, and based on Henry Hathaway's taut 1947 noir of the same name, *Kiss of Death* was designed, in part, to launch former TV bad boy David Caruso into the big time. It hasn't worked. Caruso gives a near-narcoleptic performance in the role once brilliantly taken by Victor Mature, and has seen the applause go to his much flashier co-star. Gushing for *The New York Times*, critic Janet Maslin opined that a "ferocious" Cage nearly stole the show, while in *The*



Three faces of cool: Cage, who evokes a kind of Elvis-ness in *'Wild at Heart'*, opposite; Cage in the new *'Kiss of Death'*, where he upstages the star David Caruso, far left; Brando, the original fallen angel, in Elia Kazan's *'A Streetcar Named Desire'*, left

Los Angeles Times Kenneth Turan described his part as "beautifully realised". New York magazine's David Denby went so far as to rule the performance "legendary". Another star is born, albeit substantially after the fact.

His face and name may be featured heavily in the film's promotion, but Cage has a substantially smaller role than Caruso. However, as with Robert De Niro in Brian De Palma's *The Untouchables*, Cage plays a part in Schroeder's film that goes beyond his role; he is "doing" Nicolas Cage as much as he's performing Little Junior the pumped-up New York hood. De Niro as a star is nothing more than a revered character actor. Like him, Cage has become celebrated for the extra twists he puts on a part, the surplus. In De Niro's case the famous example is the 50 pounds gained as the battered, washed-up Jake La Motta in Scorsese's *Raging Bull*. For Cage, it's the two front teeth he had extracted for *Birdy* (1984) and the live German cockroach he snacked on for *Vampire's Kiss* (1989).

In the wake of Method, pushing to extremes has become a cliché. Still, the shadow of the most acclaimed actor associated with Lee Strasberg and his Actors Studio hangs over Cage as for so many of his generation, and others: that of Marlon Brando. There's something of Brando in the way Cage confronts Cher in *Moonstruck* (1987), wearing a soiled white t-shirt, radiating heartbreaking masculine pathos, his arms muscular, his shoulders rounded with disappointment. There's something of Brando as well in the way Cage fully uses his body, now and then, to punishing effect. An important characteristic of Cage's performance style is that he charts the life rolling around inside with his entire physical being. His body tells secrets.

The tale of Brando's ruined beauty is legendary; although perhaps too easy to second-guess, some of this story's mystery lies in the fact that Brando was a star who often performed like a character actor, both in his choice of roles and his utter immersion in them. It's key that, however identified with the Method and its emphases on interiority and psychology, he was a resolutely physical actor. Over time

this emphasis on the corporeal resulted in a body transformed from one kind of Hollywood commodity into another, from pin-up to sideshow; a transformation which can be read either as a defeat or a protest.

A wag could say that Cage doesn't have much beauty to ruin, and certainly his looks don't jibe with the tediously perfect. Yet from the beginning, when Martha Coolidge cast the teenage Cage as an implausible heart-throb in *Valley Girl* (1982), the actor has parlayed his hand-dog expression and irregular features into one romantic lead after another. For many actors that course would be ideal, a matter of appealing co-stars, substantial returns, recognition.

James Dean is dead, and Elvis too. Brando is swollen, Mitchum ripe, and yet their traces linger, imprinted on the body, on the face and even in the gestures of Cage

Not so for Cage, who's done some of his finest work making Kathleen Turner's skin crawl when he should have been breaking her heart, and some of his least interesting swapping kisses and endearments with Bridget Fonda.

Cage né Coppola was born under the sign of celebrity, and this has shaped the course of his personal and professional lives. The nephew of Francis Ford Coppola, Cage changed his family name soon after making an inauspicious debut in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982) at age 17, and something of a spectacle of himself in his uncle's underrated *Rumble Fish* (1983). That film's resident nerd, Cage held his cool among the likes of Matt Dillon and Mickey Rourke. In fact Rourke's part, Motorcycle Boy, was patterned on Cage's father, Coppola's only

brother August (to whom the film is dedicated).

Having an academic for a father and Francis (with whom the actor lived for a short time as a teenager) for an uncle were obviously formative influences. Less widely known if decidedly more intriguing is the impact of his mother Joy's institutionalisation for mental illness during his youth. Cage doesn't often speak of her – a dancer and choreographer and now apparently fully sound – but what little he has said is instructive. "I've stolen from my mother a lot," he told one interviewer in 1990. "A lot of my characters' behaviorisms come directly from my mother. My creative energy came from her. She was extremely expressive and extremely emotional, extremely different."

By 30, Cage had worked with other interesting film-makers, including David Lynch and John Dahl, as well as the merely insipid. One of the latter, Norman Jewison, nonetheless managed not to smother Cage with the treacly *Moonstruck* (1987).

The actor had hitched a ride on this sleeper after its star Cher saw him in *Peggy Sue Got Married* (1986). The first film with a Cage performance of consequence, *Peggy Sue* was directed by his uncle less for love than for money in his continued attempt to recover from his disastrous adventures as a studio head.

With the significant exception of the 21-year-old Cage, *Peggy Sue* is diminished Coppola. But Cage is extraordinary, and extraordinarily unsympathetic. With his hair shaped into a blond billow and a set of buck teeth clogging his mouth, he burns through the film's sentimentality whenever he's on screen. His sheer physical awkwardness scrapes against the grain of streamlined naturalism, as well as its invitation to nostalgia. He is like a burr, a boil, his clumsiness and nasal whinny – actually inspired by a claymation horse named Pokey – working to defeat the conviction that all that came before must be better than the present.

Cage is Francis Coppola's most honest gesture in *Peggy Sue*, no doubt one reason why the director wouldn't allow the production company to fire his nephew. Still, Cage was ►



A family affair: Nicolas Cage in 'Rumble Fish', above, made by his uncle, Francis Ford Coppola

◀ soundly thrashed by reviewers when the film was released (testament not only to the poverty of their imaginations but also to Cher's infrequent better instincts). *Peggy Sue* did well at the box office; *Moonstruck* did even better, increasing Cage's popular profile. But instead of cashing in on his triumph as an offbeat romantic lead, Cage took on his most eccentric role so far, that of Peter Loew in *Vampire's Kiss* (1989).

Limited by a clumsy *mise-en-scène* and a couple of inept key performances, *Vampire's Kiss* is only important because of Cage's unforgettable performance as a Manhattan literary agent who comes to believe he has turned into a genuine prince of darkness. Now a minor cult, the film roused little interest at the time, outside of noise about Cage chowing down on that roach. The one critic who did notice more was Kael, who wrote that "when an actor plays a freak you can still spot the feet-on-the-ground professional. Nicolas Cage doesn't give you that rootedness. He's up in the air... it's a little dizzying - you're not quite sure you understand what's going on." Many years and roles later, it's clear that most critics still don't get Cage, even though, unlike Kael, they don't yet know it.

At a moment when the vacant beauty of Brad Pitt is confused with craft, and once-promising actors like Mel Gibson, Wesley Snipes, even Tom Cruise, seem permanently to have traded in their chops for pay-cheques, Cage stands out all the more. Although he deserves to be recognised for *Kiss of Death*, it's his earlier work that commands attention; in particular, Lynch's *Wild at Heart* (1990) and Dahl's cowboy noir *Red Rock West* (1992). Both features spin off from the hayseed pulp fiction popularised by the likes of Jim Thompson, but the two are radically different in conception. *Wild at Heart*, a venomous *Viva Las Vegas* with numerous self-conscious nods to *The Wizard of Oz*, turns Cage into a murderously sexy romantic who switch-hits between fucking and fighting.

If Cage was channelling the young Brando in some of his early films, by the time he got to Lynch's movie there were other influences to consider. Lynch once said that *Wild at Heart* was the sort of movie he wished Elvis had made. Cage's Sailor Ripley, dressed in tight black jeans

and a snakeskin jacket, hair swept back in an oily slick, doesn't so much evoke the real Elvis as some vague sense of Elvis-ness. The impact, however, is pure rock'n'roll, a white hipsterism driven by violence and sex and hard glints of laughter. It's rock'n'roll that makes Ripley a star. Whether he's serenading his girlfriend on the dance floor, or beating a man to death accompanied by a convulsive throb, Ripley's the main attraction.

A road movie that spins in and out of genres, *Wild at Heart* allows Cage one of his most compellingly erotic performances. Although some of Sailor's heat comes from the memory of the young Elvis, or rather the movie-made fiction in which he starred and crashed, the story's own strange rhythm is that of the 60s B movies which made minor sensations out of the likes of Bruce Dern (father of Cage's co-star Laura). In 1966, as Dern *père* was carving out his piece of history in Roger Corman's infamous biker movie *The Wild Angels*, Elvis himself appeared in *Paradise, Hawaiian Style*, thus securing his fate as the first rock'n'roll legend to be consumed by absolute, unconscious self-parody.

By the time Cage finds his way in *Wild at Heart*, entire chapters in the history of cool have closed forever. James Dean is dead, and Elvis too. Brando is swollen, Mitchum ripe, yet still their traces linger, imprinted on the body, face, and even gestures of Cage as he snaps his hips like a switchblade and promises his girl the moon. With any number of other actors, the performance could be grotesque, a morbid invention stitched together from the dead and the tired, like Frankenstein's monster. For many young male actors, especially those who aspire to stardom, the history of the movies bears down heavily, shaping them into discount Brandos and lesser Deans. Bound by box-office logic, they are forced to repeat the past instead of figuring the present.

That Cage has thus far avoided the dangers of hollow pastiche has everything to do with the fact that in the final reckoning he's a failure as a movie star. Despite various turns at top billing and the many films that he's had to carry, Cage remains more of a character actor than not. Undoubtedly one reason critics have

had difficulty recognising Cage is that he doesn't make easy sense as a star. Central to this is a performance style that often works outside the Hollywood rule, more along the lines of Brecht than Stanislavsky or Strasberg. Whatever Cage's motivation, or personal demons - using his mother's mental illness as fodder for *Vampire's Kiss* - his work on screen doesn't always neatly fit the tradition of seamless realism that has dominated American movies since the 50s.

He can feel like a supporting player even when he heads the credits. In *Red Rock West* he plays a hapless drifter who stumbles into a web of danger and deceit. Surrounded by stronger and weaker actors, he settles into the role, so conventional as to be borderline stale, with ease, finessing it like a seasoned bebop player; he delivers a relaxed, loose, wholly innovative performance even as he stays within the confines of the familiar. Here, the shock of the new is how the present need not be swallowed by the past but can work as its complement. Indeed one of the film's first shots is of a half-naked Cage waking up in his vintage Cadillac convertible. As he stretches his legs out of the front door, he personifies the archetypal morning male erection, vividly recalling Norman Mailer's famous remark that the early Brando was essentially a walking phallus.

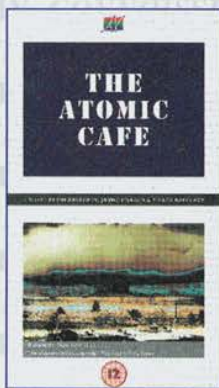
Cage has not always been able to rise to the occasion like Brando, but he strikes his own authentic notes. It's no small irony then that with *Kiss of Death* Cage has been lauded for what must be one of his least happy turns in front of the camera. This time history has confounded the actor, the film-makers and the critics. The problem starts with the character, initially Richard Widmark's. As imposing as Cage is as Little Junior, he never transcends the memory of Widmark's giggling sociopath, or, for that matter, the role's intrinsic blur. Little Junior is a hodgepodge of interesting bits of business, nothing more. That's why it's easy to single out Cage's best moments; they're sharply defined, a series of tics rather than the substance of a wholly defined character - the customised asthma inhaler, the flash of gold nestled in chest hair, the perilously inflamed *weltschmerz*.

The inability to fathom Cage has much to do with his inability to conform to commercial expectation. He may have reached for the mainstream by showing up in junk like *Amos & Andrew* (1993), but he seems incapable of fully making the leap, perhaps because it would mean leaving his own skin. Last year, following the three features he dubbed his "sunshine trilogy" (*Honeymoon in Vegas*, *Guarding Tess*, *It Could Happen to You*) Cage wrote an article expressing a desire to return to a different way of making meaning. "I want to get back to doing independent movies again," he explained, "because I believe the only way to keep any creative integrity is either to work with a powerful director who can get what he or she wants from a studio, or to do smaller, independent films." Whether this was sincere or self-serving, he took a pay cut to appear as a suicidal alcoholic in Mike Figgis' forthcoming *Leaving Las Vegas*. The great American actor continues apace. *'Kiss of Death' opens on 9 June and is reviewed on page 48 of this issue*



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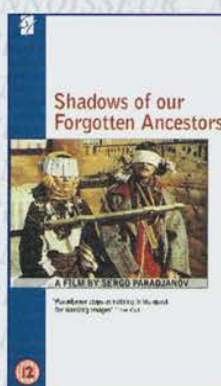


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What is this 'violence' that the media finds in film? Are you corrupt if you enjoyed the "mind-numbing" *Natural Born Killers*? By Martin Barker. Illustration: Mick Brownfield

VIOLENCE

● I enjoyed *Natural Born Killers*. That's not a confession, mind, nor a 'guilty admission'. It's a declaration. I went to see it on a rare sunny afternoon, and sat with only nine others, each of us (I'll bet) wondering: what will it be like? Will it get to me? (How?) What does a film have to be like, to get all that and that kind of publicity? Would it be right to enjoy it?

I enjoyed it. I want to see it again. Probably more than once. I'm not 'obsessed', and I'm not an 'addict'. I'm a 'fascinate', if you like.

Nor am I a self-serving intellectual without common sense, or a "trendy who calls it *NBK*" (as one reviewer sneered). I honestly can't tell you why I rated it so highly – I shall have to see it one or two more times, to begin to have an idea. Only two things do I know: first, that of all the reviews and discussions of the film that I have now read, only one comes near depicting what I felt about it. Second, that the accusations that Stone's film might be "fictional violence causing real violence" are not so much wrong – they might actually be true – as medieval witch hunts, in intent and effect.

The problem with debating still further the issue of media violence is that of finding a language in which to debate. This is not trivial, but huge. Look at who debates it. On the one hand, we have politicians (of several hues, but particularly rightwing Tories), along with concerned teachers and parents and a smattering of liberal academics and others in curious alliance with a deeply American tradition of psychological research (call these the "effects lobby"). On the other hand, we have film theorists, media analysts and cultural studies researchers, whose secret languages for talking about film and television look studiously ridiculous to outsiders. And in between, battling (where the film theorists have been startlingly silent), have been one or two sceptical empiricist researchers, led by Guy Cumberbatch – who looks more and more harassed and unhappy each time he appears.

There is no common ground across that spectrum, and no one seems to want to find one. Indeed, I don't either. Take a couple of recent examples, to illustrate why. From the safety of the middle ground, the *Guardian* ran an editor-

There simply isn't a 'thing' called 'violence in the media' that either could or couldn't 'cause' social violence. There is nothing to be researched. That being so, it means that 70 years of research have poured hundreds of millions of dollars and pounds down the drain of meaningless questions

ial on *NBK* (4 March 1995). It granted so much to a sceptical position. How absurd to have tried to blame *NBK* for a disturbed young man, Nathan Martinez, killing his parents (as *Panorama* did, in its recent Special 'The Killing Screens'). How absurd when the effects lobby did the same with *Child's Play 3* and the boys in the Bulger case. "It is as silly to blame a single film as it is to indict the Bible, which forensic researchers have found is the single most frequently quoted justification used by 'noble cause' killers – pathological murderers of prostitutes, homosexuals, debt collectors or other groups. Powerful imagery of death and destruction is not restricted to Oliver Stone. The Book of Revelations is filled with it." Well, at last! Hold on, though, for the codicil: "The arguments over evidence should be left to the researchers. Wise policy-makers already work on the common-

sense assumption that there are links."

And here beginneth the difficulty. When research fails, trust to common sense – that stain of cultural assumptions which has in its time found it obvious that Jews are a conspiratorial band of degenerates, that masturbation makes you go blind, that black slaves have an inherited predisposition to run away which must be curbed by whipping, or that pigs die because of old women's spells. 'Violence' in film and TV performs the same role in our culture today as race, witchcraft and masturbation have done in the past. And that is a language I just refuse to share.

Before anyone agrees – or disagrees – too easily with this, let me explain what it means. My position means first of all that there simply isn't a 'thing' called 'violence in the media' that either could or couldn't 'cause' social violence. There is nothing to be researched. That being so, it means that 70 years of research have poured hundreds of millions of dollars and pounds down the drain of meaningless questions – as much a waste of effort and resources as all the commissions and researches into witches. It is just stupid (I am not prepared to use a milder word) to think that 'violence' can be abstracted from the hugely different contexts of meaning and use in which it occurs – any more than you can with 'smiling', 'buying a cup of coffee' or 'the use of fast editing'.

Here is a press report on a horrible crime: "Father stabbed baby to death 'as sacrifice to ward off evil'" (*Guardian*, 21 December 1994). Wayne Campbell repeatedly stabbed his 17-month-old daughter until she died. "Before the attack in June, he had smoked cannabis and watched the film *King of Kings* about the life of Christ." If he hadn't smoked that cannabis, we might have had to consider whether a religious blockbuster might have played a hand in making this very ill man commit his dreadful crime. But of course we 'know', don't we, that in a case like this it wasn't the film which did it, but that the man was obviously so ill. And why do we 'know'? Because *King of Kings* is not a 'violent' film. If we say that a film like *this* could cause someone to commit murder, then *any* film ►



B~

◀ could cause someone to commit murder. Yet in the terms of 'common sense', somehow only certain kinds of films (particularly 'violent' ones) can trigger behaviour of this kind.

But to accept this depends entirely on my agreeing that there is something meaningful in common between all the films that are categorised as 'violent'. For example, Elizabeth Newson says that it isn't watching *one* film that corrupts, but *repeated watching of many such films*. But for this to make sense, we need to agree that watching *NBK* after watching *Child's Play 3* after watching *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* after watching *The Karate Kid* after watching whatever other genre is a process of accumulation of lots of the same. And I don't. What is more, I have never read a piece of research that even bothers trying to convince me – it is just taken for granted. And taken-for-grantedness is just the central characteristic of that similarly problematic category 'common sense'.

There is, in truth, an excruciating casualness about the way the moral critics cite their films. In her April 1994 Report which provided the main ground for the Home Secretary's capitulation to the central tenets of David Alton's Amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill, Newson does cite one film apart from *Child's Play 3* (a film, incidentally, which spends more than half its narrative time following the hero's attempt to protect a young child from harm). In the middle of a discussion of what she sees as a worsening trend in mainstream cinema, she warns us of a new kind of film which identifies with the attacker instead of the victim, and suddenly drops this in: "For example in a recent film we see in lit silhouette a woman being gang-raped, as a way of punishing her."

Outrageous claims

Now that sounds pretty nasty. So I wrote and asked her what this was, because all my film-literate friends were struggling to name the film. Newson wasn't sure she could remember, but we did locate it eventually – it was Peter Greenaway's allegorical *The Baby of Mâcon*, a 'typical' Greenaway film, looking like slow-moving oil paintings, in which actors play the part of medieval churchmen in conflict with a young woman whose brother appears capable of miracles. But at the end, the actor/role breaks down as the church prepares to punish the woman for resisting its control – and the woman is 'really' raped as the Bishop preaches to us in front of the camera. However: "mainstream"? "Encouraging identification with the perpetrators"? Oh, come on. How is it that for so long we have let people like this get away with such outrageous claims?

Or again, in that *Panorama* Special: half way in, the narrator's voice cut in on Cumberbatch's hesitant rejection of the evidence with a confident counter. There are now many in America who are sure: "They have a long record of research into screen violence [note the unproblematic category, constructed at the beginning by intercutting *NBK* with *Power Rangers*] and they believe that its [note the singular] effects on children can't be dismissed." After a quick guide round one Professor Huesman's elegant lecturing style, we met Dr Brad

Elizabeth Newson says that it isn't watching one film that corrupts, but repeated watching of many such films. For this to make sense, we need to agree that watching 'NBK' after 'Child's Play 3' after 'The Karate Kid' is a process of accumulation. And I don't...

Bushman and his research. He takes first year undergraduates and gets them frustrated. Then, "Half of his subjects are shown action films which contain violence, the other half are shown material which is just as exciting but doesn't contain violence." Hang on – who says they're "just as exciting"? Just what films did he use? How did he know which ones they had seen before? Had he thought about what part they played in their culture? And so on. And come to that, what is this category 'excitement'? We have become so used to hearing claims of this kind, I doubt many people even noticed the assumptions as they heard about Bushman's research. (Now that is a real example of media/cultural power!)

The problem with the language of the "effects lobby" is not simply that it leads to bad experiments (first year undergraduates taking part in their professors' researches – usually with rewards – and not second-guessing what the research is about?); it also reduces films to stimulus-response mechanisms, without history or meanings, and their viewers to twitching semiconductors without prior expectations, understandings or skills.

Semiconductors have two states: on/off. The prime issue which concerns this sort of 'science' is what increases or decreases the likelihood of a switch from one state to the other. Now I want to argue that there is a real possibility of some people living the very role which the effects theorists posit. But as with the witches, these people are products of the discourse, not "natural born witches".

For the 'common sense' account is so widely believed that it isn't only the critics and haters of films like *NBK* that see film through this lens. So also do many fans. People, including those unhappy and desperate enough to be seeking ultimate solutions to problems in their lives, will see the film *through the lens of the category 'violence'*. I am therefore quite prepared to believe that Martinez was influenced by his seeing of the film – because he had been endlessly told that this was a film which might authorise vio-

lence. In just the same sad way, it is not hard to find, in the reports of witch trials, young and old women claiming to be witches, because that is the lens through which *their* culture invited them to see themselves.

The truth is that, sometime, somewhere, someone will 'copy' a 'violent' film. But what is statistically extraordinary is how rare this is. Given the number of claimed cases over the last many years, any serious researcher ought to be pointing out that statistical randomness would have produced more authenticated cases than we so far have. But this wouldn't be relevant to how the argument actually goes. For the argument is in no way governed by the status of such evidence, but rather by cultural confidence in the categories. Nothing proves this more than this very paradox: when yet another claimed case of copycatting is disproved, it does not count *against* the 'violence' thesis, as it logically should; instead it enters a sort of permanent 'pending' file, forever ready for resurrection. 'Violence' research, after 70 years, has the same status and operates in the same fashion as the search for proof of extra-terrestrial life. No proof this time, maybe (though we suspect someone of hushing up the evidence). But soon...

A film's messages

Natural Born Killers is an excellent example of these processes in action. Here is a film that, even more than most around it, cannot possibly be detached from its history. It has a history in Oliver Stone's earlier films, and was heavily promoted as the latest from the man who gave you *Platoon*, *JFK* and so on. It has a history in that the film itself is constantly addressing its own time – even the most bizarrely blind critics couldn't help notice the huge number of intertextual references with which it is freighted. It has a history, of course, among the critics who have seen it as "Stone's revenge" on Hollywood (and/or on Michael Medved's attack on Hollywood's corrupting influence). It is a piece of culture and of history within a culture with a history, at so many levels. Therefore it is a nonsense to suppose that responses to *NBK* can be lifted outside that history. Yet that is exactly what more than 70 years of research depends on our doing. Film is not seen as film – pieces of culture created and distributed via a medium with its own conventions, traditions and rituals – but as bad medicine, literally. However, as much as we need to insist that films and audience responses to films can only be understood culturally and historically, I also want to insist that the *violence debate itself* is part of that cultural history.

To be a viewer of Stone's *NBK* was to be an audience for a piece of damned culture. A profusion of talk – from politicians, moralists, critics – predefined in both crude and subtle ways how we were then pressed to view the film. Nowhere reveals that better than the reviews and discussion pieces: preparing to write this, I have read 47. Reviews are rarely simply personal responses: they bring to bear discursively powerful categories of judgment.

Among these are rules about how films embody and convey messages (how we know

what a film is 'about', in other words); how they 'work' on an audience; what shall count as consistency or illogicality in a film; the relations between aesthetic and intellectual responses; what is the point of seeing films; what kinds of pleasures are possible, or admissible; and what it means to be an audience for a film.

What is striking in *all bar one* of the 47 is the effective absence of any space to be an enjoying audience without condemning oneself as in some way bad.

One review alone acknowledges that a film like this is going to mean different things to different audiences. For the rest, there is only one possible meaning and effect – even if (on reflection) it isn't a matter of you going home and killing your parents, then stopping off in a restaurant for a few more...

Achieving meaning

There are several ways in which this one meaning is achieved. The simplest is just the accusation that the film works by "bludgeoning us". The *Daily Express* called it "overkill", *Wales on Sunday* called it "bludgeoning us into uncaring submission", *People* called the film "mind-numbing". Just what do we say, if we actually fancy seeing it – or if we have seen it, and quite liked it? We either feel ourselves judged, or have to find the resources to reject this discourse. Am I numbed? Do I not even realise it? Who is this 'us' that knows this, when I don't?

The 'message' of the film, then? According to the *Mail*, it was straightforwardly an "advertisement for killing", it was an evil film "lacking morality". (Don't understate their judgment: "*Natural Born Killers*," wrote Christopher Tookey, 21 February, "is one of the most evil films ever made." Get out of that one, enjoying viewer!) For my local Bristol *Evening Post* it was "killing

According to the Mail, 'NBK' was an "advertisement for killing", an evil film "lacking morality". For my local Bristol Evening Post it was "killing for killing's sake". For the Sun it was "clever" for the way it glorified violence under the guise of social comment. If you can't see behind this guise, what kind of person are you?

for killing's sake". For the *Sun* it was worse than that because it was "clever" for the way it glorified violence *under the guise* of social comment. (If you go and see the film, and can't see behind the guise, what kind of person are you?)

The *kind* of violence it depicted got to many reviewers. In the 'knowing' Press, the usual response was to contrast Stone with Tarantino. Quentin is OK because he uses irony – and of course "we all agree" that irony makes the (post-modern) world go round. Stone is *far* too serious – isn't he? (Damien Hirst had a go at this tendency in the *Guardian* after they had three articles in a double-page spread arguing this.)

Thereafter a curious split emerged among reviewers, a split which tells much about the current state of cultural categories of leisure. To the broadsheets, by and large, the film was bad (and therefore viewing-pleasure naughtily unacceptable) because the film wasn't *intellectual* enough. The *Sight and Sound* review damned it as "self-contradictory", while the *Independent on Sunday* claimed it was "illogical" – and therefore all the more dangerous. The *Sunday Express* turned that almost into a let-out: "See it," they said, "but don't analyse it."

For (as the *Evening Standard* argued) there is a "split" in the film, between the intellectual and the visual. You, problematic viewer, may have *thought* you were responding to what you saw as a thoughtful set of themes and filmic presentation – that just shows how much *you* were taken in. For the tabloids, the same distinction took on different labels. "No valid plot, direction, or entertainment value," announced the *Evening Post*. The *News of the World* shifted that a bit without changing the categories: "Fun, in a nasty sort of a way." If you were entertained, heaven help you – and us...

But what linked *all* these reviews was their attitude to audience pleasures. More than half the reviews simply loathed the film, and declared effectively that anyone who did like it was a thoroughly worrying person – whether for their appalling level of education, cultural taste categories, or for their potential to do mischief. The other half of the reviewers occupied exactly the same territory, by admitting to *viewing with guilty pleasure*. *Night & Day*: "I love it – while I am watching." The *Sunday Telegraph* told of its "guilty enjoyment". *Today* announced that they "liked it but it was dangerous." And at back of all this you could feel the distinction that that paper of papers, the *Southend Evening Echo*, overtly used: when you go and see the film, they asked, will you be "adult enough" to remember that it is just a film – or will you (by implication) be 'taken in' and start thinking about its meanings, believing in what it presents? Are you vulnerable? Viewer, judge thyself.

You may think that this is just a review of the reviews. If so, you have missed my point, which is this: that *NBK* came so surrounded with discourses of danger, so hedged in and mediated by endless talk of its dangers, that *if anyone DID go out and shoot up their parents or a diner as a result, it was the discourses that provoked such acts, not the film, because it was the discourses that required this 'reading' of the film.*

Every film comes to us with an accompaniment of generic recognitions, reading skills,

'NBK' is a cornucopia of a movie, unrestrained and unapologetic. It doesn't laugh itself out of its own antagonism. It reminds me of previous cases of hysterically attacked cultural forms which were taken to epitomise all that was going wrong: 'Wild Boys Of London' in the 1860s, certain horror comics in the 1950s and the 'video nasties' in the 1980s

prior knowledges, and so on – that is what makes utter nonsense of the entire "effects" tradition. But in *this* case, the sheer volume and unidirectional nature of the previewing discourses have made it nearly impossible, without a great effort, to see the film other than as a dirty dog of a movie.

Which isn't right, let alone fair. Consider now that single article that changed the ground rules. Larry Gross, screenwriter for *Geronimo An American Legend*, explored his reactions to the film in the March *Sight & Sound*: "I don't know of a movie that has made me more ambivalent, more undecided and more uncertain in my reaction than *Natural Born Killers*." And he went on to counterpoint a judgment on the parts of the film with a disturbing and challenging sense of the whole. What he recognised, and went on to explore in exemplary fashion, was just how determined his reactions to the film were by his own situation. And that is just the point which not one of the other reviewers even came close to.

Scabs and sores

NBK is a cornucopia of a movie, unrestrained and unapologetic. It doesn't laugh itself out of its own antagonism. As a result, it reminds me of several previous cases of hysterically attacked cultural forms which at their own particular moment were taken to epitomise all that was going wrong: *Wild Boys Of London* in the 1860/70s, certain horror comics of the 1950s, one or two of the so-called 'video nasties' of the 1980s. Their 'message' was an abrasion on the scabs and sores of their uneasy cultures. That fact renders redundant any assessment of how 'good' the film is. It is far too important for that. *Special thanks are due the BFI and BBFC for providing the reviews and discussion material*



THE SHADOW

Is 'Rob Roy', the Michael Caton-Jones film, a tasteful costume drama like 'The Madness of King George', or a magnificent and misty Boys' Own Tartan Epic? By Liz Lochhead

● In Tony Roper's very popular 80s play *The Steamie* – very popular here in Scotland, that is – three Glasgow women at the communal laundry in the mid-50s are discussing Saturday night culture: "They're a pain in the arse, yon bloody British Pictures. Ron Randall leaning up against a lamp post, smoking a fag. He tells you the bloody story afore ye've seen it, then flicks the fag away, supposed to be tough. They cannae fight right!" The consensus: James Cagney could obliterate the lot, one punch.

Quentin Tarantino has Clarence pontificate in *True Romance* on all that "Merchant/Ivory claptrap. They ain't plays, they ain't books, they certainly ain't movies, they're films. And do you know what films are? They're for people who don't like movies." Well, I'm not sure about Clarence – maybe his prejudice against cowboys in skirts would be too great – but I thought Michael Caton-Jones' new release *Rob Roy* was a movie not a film. And I'm positive the women in the steamie would have been very taken with it as the Big Picture any Saturday night. Back then in the 50s, the frank and free talk and the mildly raunchy private endearments would have thrilled them as much as the old-fashioned swashbuckling did me today.

Honour made him a man.

Courage made him a hero.

History made him a Legend.

This is the kind of enjoyable hokum on the marquee that sets the tone for the *Big Country*/John Wayne style of *Rob Roy*, even if all the love stuff would have The Duke blush.

I can't remember if *The Madness of King George* had anything so vulgar as a slogan. If it did I don't remember it, so it must have been something as tasteful and muted as the film itself. Because it's interesting to compare these two recent works. One, I'm afraid, very much a British Film, the other a Scottish American movie. Both of them with very 'historical' sources, and both with self-conscious references to America: as if to say, "This is about you, really, you should like this, honest, even if it's funny accents and olden-days costumes."

The Madness of King George is about a real historic figure with absolutely no mythic presence in the national consciousness. *Rob Roy* is about a genuinely mythic figure with a very tenuous relationship to the historical man born three centuries ago. One is predicated on the not very startling *aperçu* that if you're royal, your life 'tis not your own, and a king is not just an ordinary man. The other, that an ordinary man – if he is a man of honour – is a king.

For all the depth and excellence of Nigel Hawthorne's performance and how affecting he made this individual human predicament; for all the humane and empathetic wit of Alan Bennett's script; for all the sumptuous panning across heritage landscapes and tracking through heritage interiors past acreages of gorgeous costumes, *The Madness of King George* was finally reductive.

Madness abated, we see Mr King restored to Mrs King, rather better but still perhaps not quite the full shilling, and probably not yet accepting in his heart of hearts that the American colonies are really and truly gone. "I have always been myself even when I was ill. Only



now I seem myself. That's the important thing: I have remembered how to seem." This is gentle and touching, and may make us smile. But in terms of filling a big screen with big-screen emotions it's not a patch on this: Rob Roy to Wee Son: "Men have honour." WS to RR: "Do women have honour, Daddy?" RR to WS: "Women are the heart of honour and we cherish and protect it in them. You must never mistreat a woman or malign a man, nor stand by and see another do so."

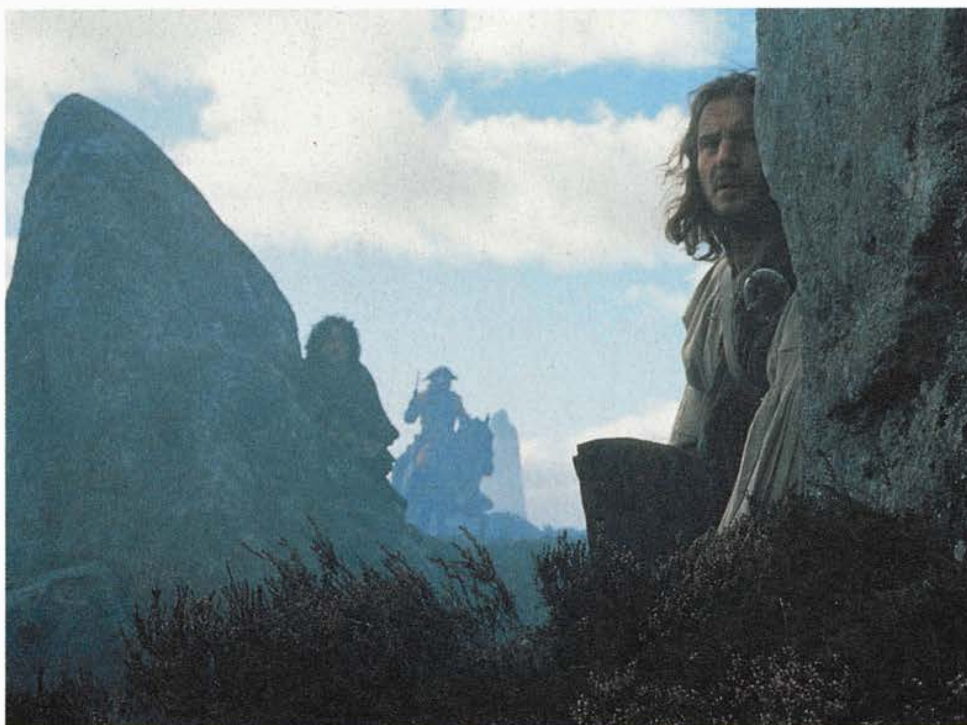
Men have and men act. Women are. We may be astonished to hear such old-fashioned sentiments uttered without irony, but we are quite likely to admire Alan Sharp's epic nerve. In both senses of the word.

Sharp (author of *Ulzana's Raid* and *Night Moves* among others) is one of the very few internationally known Scottish screenwriters. Producer Peter Broughan was determined from the word go that Sharp was the man who must write *Rob Roy*. So I imagine for Sharp it was a case of first-the-phonecall, rather than a burning, personal desire to explore the "Rob Roy Highland Rogue" myth. This was an unashamed genre piece – and yet it reveals a very particular take on a subject which to date has spawned more than half a dozen screen adaptations.

Daniel Defoe was the first to make use of the legend in a literary work. Later Sir Walter Scott simply appropriated Rob Roy for his own romantic purposes. (Scott was a Lowlander, remember, who lived a couple of generations after the Jacobites, and in his novels conveniently elided from memory their truly disastrous legacy for the Highlands, by inventing a mythic, tartan-and-sublime, noble past, a gloriously misty Other, out of the failed attempt to reinstate a Catholic, feudal, absolutist monarchy.) Wordsworth wrote a poem about an equally romanticised version of this real-life cattle-thief, protection-racketeer, free-booter and pragmatist: Rob Roy MacGregor [sic] was a man said to boast that he "was neither for King Shamus nor King Shordie but for King Spulzie." (Spulzie means loot.) It seems agreed that the MacGregors were Protestants whose surname was proscribed for Jacobite sympathies. ►

Romancing the glens:
Liam Neeson and Jessica Lange as Rob Roy and Mary MacGregor, left; Tim Roth as the foppish Cunningham, above; Neeson the warrior, below





Ghosts of Scotland past: the Highland dream in 'Rob Roy', the new Scots-American release

◀ Obviously Rob Roy was a man of many contradictions. But contradictions are not the stuff of major motion pictures.

Liam Neeson plays a hero on a heroic scale. He's a gentle giant of a man who, as befits his star status, makes no discernible effort to modify his Irish accent into Scots, who loves his wife, teaches his sons about honour and is scrupulous, indeed fanatical, about being a "man of his word" and who, just when even the most sentimental of us in the audience are beginning to sicken of this pan-Celtic paragon, wakes us up by truly amazing escapes, wily if emetic concealments, and thrilling, single-hand combat, against the odds.

Jessica Lange plays Mary MacGregor beautifully, which must be very difficult as Mary is the ultimate male fantasy. As permanent as the land itself – indeed she is the land, wild, lovely, the place he must come back to – she is eternally desirable and desirous, murmuring sweet nothings about standing stones as she clammers astride her man in the slanting shadow of one magnificent specimen, urging him to "make a silk purse out of my sow's ear again."

Now I was 19 the first time I read that line in Sharp's novel *A Green Tree In Gedde*, in 1967, the *Summer of Love*: I remember being very impressed. But what thrilled me most about the novel was that it took place in a very recognisable Greenock and Glasgow – why, the assignation was actually round the corner in Kelvingrove street! Imagine, somewhere I knew, in a book! It would take a while – till *That Sinking Feeling* or *Comfort and Joy* – until I saw places I recognised in a film.

Now, in *Rob Roy*, I was looking at a very familiar landscape (although piled-up cairns are rather more familiar than standing stones on hilltops, truth be told) that I absolutely did not recognise, so successfully had it been transformed into a romantic dreamland. Of course we must dream on celluloid, but we need to dream more, different and varied dreams, to

ask ourselves what truths about the present we are hiding from ourselves by lying about the past. It's obvious why *Brigadoon* is such a perfect metaphor for Scottish culture. If you only come alive for one day every 200 years, or you only flare out on film once every decade, then it's hard not to stay frozen in static, heroic but hopeless representations of necessary myths. As Eddie Dick says, in the editorial to *From Limelight to Satellite*: "The imagined Scotland is not imaginary."

Rob Roy is somehow successful because it has the nerve to be a tartan-and-the-heilans picture by Clydeside men. These mountains are made with girders. The film critic John Caughie says (apropos the 1982 *Scotch Reels* analysis of "representations of Scottishness") that there are "three governing discourses": "tartanry", "kailyard", and "Clydeside". Well, I don't suppose, Scotland being Scotland, that *Rob Roy* will be immune from criticisms that it's "kailyard keech": cabbage-patch trash. Which is exactly inaccurate: a cabbage-patch reductiveness is one thing you cannot justly accuse it of. Rather there is a grandiosity, a swagger, an unconscious blokishness that you might deplore but cannot but enjoy watching, truth be told. The homophobic relish with which the crude clansmen taunt the foppish Cunningham that he "can't tell arse from quim," is itself portrayed



John Hurt as Montrose in 'Rob Roy'

with a homophobic relish just about justified by the fact that they are patently wrong on both counts. Cunningham is *extremely* dangerous, both in sex and war, and provides Tim Roth with a role to steal the movie from under the noses of the stars. Everybody, surely, would rather watch Roth be a hiss-the-villain (and it's a performance of subtlety and dark vulnerability as well as enormous bravura) than watch Neeson and Lange in their sentimental idealised married love.

I can't help feeling the writer and the director probably thought all the love stuff would make it a woman's picture too. But what they reveal is a deep male yearning for an ideal: the woman as impossibly wise (she told him so!) and forbearing (she doesn't remind him she told him so!) as well as self-sacrificing, natural, full of unlikely mother-love, which seems to well up in any circumstances – and as hot as a honeymoon to boot.

Couldn't she have resented, just a little, being left alone to be raped? Couldn't she have hated the fruit of the rape, just until it was born? Couldn't he, however unreasonably, have reacted with immediate human revulsion which he'd have to fight against in himself? No, it was a big movie, brave enough to be black and white, and in the end, after a bit of a dip – the film is maybe half an hour too long – it engages in a genuinely thrilling fight to the death.

The swordfights are the best I've seen. There are compelling secondary performances from Vicki Masson, Brian McCordie and the wonderful Andrew Keir, as well as John Hurt as Montrose who may or may not have reason to love Cunningham; there is heartstopping Gaelic singing (though filmed a little too reverently) from Karen Matheson, which provides a good antidote to the clichéd antique movie score by Carter Burwell: there is a great joke about the "Calvinists no' approving of shagging standing up, because it might lead to dancing."

But I'm left wondering what this not-very-burdened-with-history Historical Movie tells me about the current myths and dreams and longings in this small country...

For most of us Lowland Scots, Rob Roy MacGregor represents the lost one, the shadow, the Highlander with his own fey red-haired otherness and honour. If we are the dominant culture, then he is in the same position as woman is to man: feared, revered, romanticised and put on an impossible pedestal.

In *Shallow Grave* the dead nerd accountant in his voice-over tells us, "This could be any city, anywhere." Not without irony, as we're just about to be hauled at high speed (to techno music) through the certainly unique cityscape of Edinburgh's New Town: later we go to a hospital tartan fundraiser ball inhabited by types only found, in my experience, in that fair city. "This could be any city, anywhere." And then unfolds the perfect chilly little morality tale of greed, murder and bad faith.

Oh, no, it couldn't happen here, we think. Not while Rob Roy is ours and he is for us the heart of honour. No wonder the villains get all the best lines.

'Rob Roy' opened on 19 May and is reviewed on page 51 of this issue

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SAUL BASS AND BILLY WILDER: IN CONVERSATION



Friends who worked together on 'The Seven Year Itch', the designer and the director reflect on cinema past and present, from Eisenstein through 'Psycho' to the remakes of Wilder's great films. Interview by Pat Kirkham

● Last August in LA I had the pleasure of a leisurely lunch with Billy Wilder (89) and Saul Bass (75) – both wonderful raconteurs, and both thought by many to be Hollywood's greatest living director and title-sequence designer respectively.

Bass – best known to *Sight and Sound* readers for his film-title sequences of the 50s and 60s, including *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955), *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959) and *Psycho* (1960) and for his own film *Quest* (1983) – still runs a successful design office (last summer he was designing a series of petrol stations in Japan). His work in films was only ever one part of his working life: when the industry wanted the sort of titles he was not prepared to produce, he simply returned to what he had done all along, graphic design. In recent years and, in collaboration with his wife Elaine, he has returned to film work and some very impressive title sequences, including those for the most recent Martin Scorsese movies: *Cape Fear* (1991), *The Age of Innocence* (1993) and *Casino* (forthcoming).

Things were slightly different for Wilder, when the industry wanted the sort of scripts and films he was not prepared to write or direct. With no other occupation to fall back on, what might have been hard times were cushioned by money made from what had been more a hobby: his magnificent art and design collection. Though he had no financial need to continue writing, he did – and does so today. Partly I think he continued because there was writing in him still to come out, but partly because to stop would perhaps have been to acknowledge that "they" had in some ways won; that what he believed in could not flourish.

Saul Bass: Billy, your coming over today prompted memories of working on an advertisement for your film *One, Two, Three* (1961) and I'd like to give you this proof of the one we had to withdraw. I should fill you in on this, Pat. Billy ran this as a trade ad, but all hell let loose because I had used the shape of a Coca Cola

bottle. It was a striking image but the Coca Cola corporation didn't like it much and that was the end of that.

Billy Wilder: Boy, was it *not*. Coca Cola made such a fuss that we were forced to withdraw it.

Pat Kirkham: What did you use instead?

SB: We used a totally different, effective, but less satisfactory approach.

BW: Apart from your posters, Saul, I have come to the conclusion that some of the best posters are Polish, especially for movies. I have one of *Sunset Boulevard* (1950). It is simple yet powerful. You look and know it is Gloria Swanson but out of her hair comes film. It is the Medusa. Why can't we do that, I ask myself? The answer is simple: it is because here they insist on the faces of the stars, and then the lawyers of the different stars argue about the size of the images.

SB: That's equally true of the sizes of the names

of the stars. It's hard to deal with the typography in a film poster because frequently four names have to be on one line. One name cannot appear ahead of the other. You end up with tall, thin, compressed typography.

BW: And you can never read it – nor do you want to. Then one is obliged to add the names of the seven or so producers – the line producer, the executive producer, the so-and-so producer, a so-and-so picture. It is all ego. Do you think people go to a movie because Joe Smenderink produced something? Nobody knows who these people are.

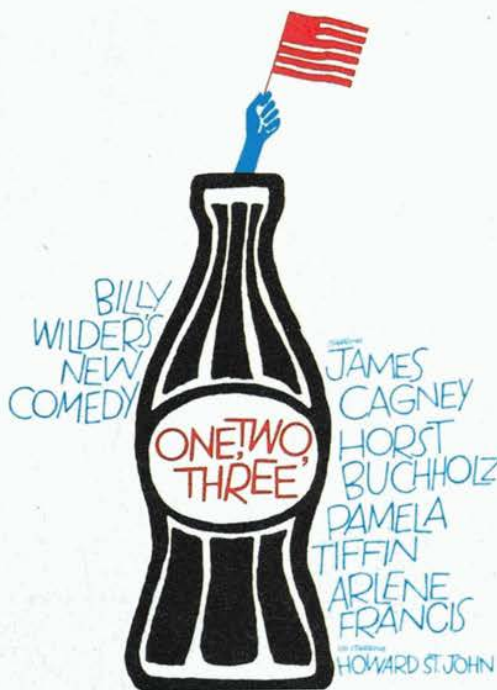
SB: It was something along these lines that led me into titles. I felt that people certainly wanted (or deserved) more than a long list of names that didn't mean anything at the beginning of a movie.

BW: All you need are the main elements – like you do! – in a poster or in titles. There aren't many people who are good at titles – it is not an easy task. But there is one person I wanted to mention: Maurice Binder who went to England. He did the titles for the *James Bond* series [from 1962]. You remember the gun; it twirls around, it gets bigger and on comes Sean Connery who shoots at you. Actually it was rather silly of them to do all this, because it was the best part of the picture! There is a problem; if you open your mouth too wide with the titles you can only go down. You can't reshoot the picture. Saul, you did your titles almost the best anyone ever did, but even with a good director you can still get a mediocre picture.

SB: True. I had just that happen to me a couple of times.

BW: Is it true that you did that terrific shower montage for *Psycho*, one of the most marvellous moments in it?

SB: That was really an unusual situation. By the time I worked on *Psycho* (1960) I had already worked on *Vertigo* (1958) and *North By Northwest* (1959) for Hitchcock, so we knew each other pretty well. He said there are a few scenes that



are very important – fulcrum scenes – and I want to do something special. So he gave me those to work on and think about. But when I came back with the storyboard for the shower scene, Hitch was very uneasy about it. My approach was very different from his. His great forte – his great love – is very long continuous shots, and I'm proposing a staccato-like montage. He was uneasy. So I stayed late one night and used Janet Leigh's stand-in –

BW: – and butchered her

SB: I just shot a few hundred feet, chopped it up into short cuts, edited it together, and showed it to Hitch. He was reassured. He thought it would work.

BW: And how it would work! It is one of those unforgettable things. That reminds me of when I first met him – well, saw him, I didn't meet him. It was in Germany. I was about 26 or 27 when they started sound pictures at the old UFA company. They did them with three casts, German, French and English. There were three directors on this particular film but the first one was the German one – he decided where the camera would go. Hitchcock was the guy who did the English version. They had not learned how to loop a picture or how to subtitle it (which is something I hate).

I was talking recently to someone about the importance of an insert. People think that inserts are easy to shoot but they are not. Fritz Lang had, say, a pair of glasses on a surface, and he would take three or four hours deciding how to shoot it. We were talking about which were the most riveting inserts in movies. My vote went for Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925).

PK: Which particular insert?

BW: The spectacles and the maggots. The sailors are revolting against the food on the ship and the captain says there is nothing wrong. The sailors say there are little animals in there eating away at that meat. "OK," says the captain, "let's get the doctor down." Now in those days we made glasses where one lens slides over the other one and makes a magnifying glass and, when you see through the magnifying glass, there are thousands of maggots. The doctor puts the glasses on, turns to the captain and says, "It is perfectly all right." That's when you wanted to jump out of the seat and right away become a Communist. Terrific. With Hitchcock it is the man with the missing finger [*The 39 Steps*, 1935].

SB: There was a great edit Hitch did in *The Lady Vanishes* (1938). First cut: she opens her mouth to scream. Second cut: the train whistle screeches. You know, your mention of Eisenstein reminded me of Russian cinema and montage and an experience I want to share with you. As I was growing up I watched Russian films and fell in love with montage. Do you know Slavko Vorkapich?

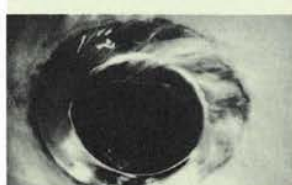
BW: Yes, he was here [i.e. in LA], and died not so long ago. A special effects man.

SB: He did all those montages for MGM. You know, the immigrant arrives in New York. We pick him up digging a ditch. The pick falls, the dirt flies. Cut: welder's sparks scattering. Factory wheels churn. Pistons pump. Smokestacks belch smoke. Leaves of calendar float off screen. Skyscrapers rise out of the ground. We pan up the side of a building. Up. Up to the top. ►



Shapes of things to come: Saul Bass' withdrawn poster for the Wilder film 'One, Two, Three', below far left; the opening titles for Wilder's 'The Seven Year Itch', left; a sequence from Bass' opening to Hitchcock's 'Vertigo', below





Rhythms of things: the shower sequence from Hitchcock's 'Psycho', worked on by Saul Bass, who storyboarded, shot and edited it, right

◀ Through the window to a man at a desk, surrounded by phones and assistants. Answering phones. Barking orders. Zoom in. It's our immigrant. He's a titan of industry. He rules the world! All in a minute and a half. That was Vorkapich. Well, I was at an evening with Slavko and I tell him how wonderful and imaginative I thought Russian montage was. He snorts: "Montage! Let me tell you about montage!" He then tells me that at the time of the Russian Revolution, when he was young, he worked at the German Studios, at UFA. After the revolution the Russians had equipment but no film. So the German comrades in UFA used to collect the short ends and send them to Russia. So Slavko snorts [and here Bass imitates Vorkapich's voice and accent]: "What could you do with short ends except make montage?" Outrageous but reasonable. Do you believe that?

BW: Well, it's a good story.

PK: How did you two meet?

BW: It was through Charles and Ray Eames. I think they suggested I use Saul, whose work they liked.

SB: Our very first contact was when you asked me to do the titles for *The Seven Year Itch* (1955). It was only the third or fourth title I did. It was after that that I remember meeting you with the Eameses.

BW: Your reputation was made very very quickly. But with titles the danger is that if you do many pictures, you have to be very inventive or else people say, "Hey, this is the same guy who..." You have to change with the picture.

SB: Absolutely. I did a title for Willie Wyler for *The Big Country* in 1958, and got a call from one of my friends who saw the film and said, "You know, that isn't like a Saul Bass title." I asked, "What the hell is a Saul Bass title?" It's the film that counts, and the title has to be supportive of the film. I tried to have my titles take on a colouration that was appropriate to the film. Eventually titles got out of hand. It got to a point where it seemed that somebody got up there before the film and did a tap dance. Fancy titles became fashionable rather than useful and that's when I got out.

BW: Pat, his first-rate titles could be hurtful to the director because sometimes his stuff was on a much higher level than the picture. To be first-rate, titles have to be original, help the audience, and put them in the right mood. The most important thing is to get the audience on your side, to work with you, to work for the film.

PK: When you hired him for 'The Seven Year Itch' did you set a tight brief or did you let this new talent have a fairly free hand?

BW: I really forget now. But in another area we were absolute idiots not to capitalise on what 30 or 40 years later is the symbol for that film. You know, Marilyn's frock blowing up. We had it there but it didn't occur to us to use it. I forget what the actual advertising campaign was now. Actually *The Seven Year Itch* wasn't a very good picture. Well, it was all right.

SB: What are you talking about? *The Seven Year Itch* was a wonderful film!

BW: I'll tell you what I'm talking about. First of all I went to New York to test, because we knew we had Marilyn Monroe but we didn't have a leading man. And I tested a guy, a very young

man who was improvising this scene. He was so funny, I just screamed with laughter. I thought I must have this guy because he's so interesting. The guy was Walter Matthau and he would have been absolutely terrific. But the producers said, "Why do you make it so difficult? Tom Ewell has played that part now 900 times [i.e. in the original stage version], he knows all the words, knows where all the laughs are." But I was not powerful enough to get Matthau – and Marilyn Monroe was not Marilyn Monroe back then either.

I said to them, look, this thing is only good in that there is what in German they call a 'straw widower' [i.e. a husband temporarily separated from his wife]. The family goes into the country for the summer months and now you go crazy. There are two things we need to plan, and to plan very very well. The one is that the guy who has all those daydreams should not be very attractive at all, and the other that the girl upstairs must be extremely sexy and must want something from him so that he thinks she wants him. And that object is an air conditioner. That way she can say, "Can I sleep here tonight?" and he goes crazy. She says, "I can't sleep in that heat, I'll just go upstairs and get my underwear from the refrigerator." He says, "Wow! From where?"

Censorship was a problem. I argued that at a certain point we must say it, see it, feel it: that he slept with Marilyn Monroe. "Oh my God, Mary, Mary," the studio said. Censorship, censorship. I remember spending a night wondering what to do. I had to come up with something. I finally said, "There is one thing we can do that will be subtle enough for the censors not to object. Try this: there is a room maid who is making up the bed, and there is a hairpin, which she simply picks up and then throws away." A hairpin, that is all. That is all I wanted. But I couldn't get it. I had a tough time. I had a less tough time with *Some Like It Hot* (1959) but that was better material. *The Seven Year Itch* could certainly have been ten times as good.

SB: I remember it very well. For you my title was just one element in a very complex thing – a movie. For me that element was a life. I was doing a piece of film for a man whose work I viewed with awe. I had just done a title for a film called *The Racers* (1955) for Darryl Zanuck. (Actually it was for Julian Blaustein but Zanuck was there behind the scenes.) It was the very first time I had designed something that called for live action. My earlier work had been animation – *The Man with the Golden Arm*, etcetera – and I was very green. I didn't even know I was going to shoot it. All I knew was that they had asked if I was available on Tuesday morning. So I go to stage seven on Tuesday morning thinking it was awfully nice of them to invite me to see what they are going to do with my storyboard. I'm watching them prepare, lay dolly tracks, etcetera. Then some man comes over and says "Are you ready?" Then the Assistant Director yells "Quiet!" And I realise I'm the director! I thought, "Hey, I'm in charge!" I said, "Wait a minute, let me see the move."

BW: What you do is say, "Let me look through the camera." Then you look at a screw in the background and say, "Yes, that looks pretty good."

You know, Pat, in the 1930s – in the days of the big old studios – when I came to Hollywood,

we said that MGM had more stars than there are in heaven. The studios were like castles but there was no connection between them. There was a sort of patriotism about which studio you were at: "I'm at Paramount," we would say. "I'm at Warners." I was at Paramount and I didn't know anybody who was at Warner Bros. There was room for the strong man without knowledge but with instinct and ambition. Like Goldwyn. He couldn't spell but he knew what was good and what would work and there was money for the best writers and directors.

Each studio had over 100 writers; Paramount had 105. 11 pages of script had to be delivered every Thursday and on yellow paper. Why I don't know, but that's what we did. The studio heads simply took scripts from their staff and then asked which of their own stars would be free of filming commitments on such and such a date. "Will Clark be free? No - OK, then we'll have Spencer Tracy for this one instead." The discussions weren't with agents. Today writers work at home, agents make deals and sell scripts to the studios. We move in only for the time it takes to do the final preparations and to shoot. Studios to us now are like the Ramada Inn - you move in and you move out.

PK: Interest in your work is currently as great as it has ever been. Some of the movies you wrote or directed are currently being remade. What do you think of this?

BW: Right now I'm King of the remakes. Four of my movies are being remade but I'm not getting a penny. This is because the contracts were made after television.

I tell you, one day I met Jack Warner, who said, "This is the greatest day of my life."

"What has happened?"

"Guess."

"What happened, Jack?"

"I sold the whole shit, the studio, the buildings and all of that crap, for \$25 million."

Well, anyone could get \$50 million for just *Casablanca* alone, but he was so delighted, because he got rid of it.

PK: Which films are being remade?

BW: They have made an opera out of *Sunset Boulevard*, it's in London and here, and they are remaking *Sabrina* (1954), *Love in the Afternoon* (1957), and *The Apartment* (1960, but this will be done in instalments for television). Not one single penny do I get. Only on one picture do I have an option, if somebody wants to redo it - I forget what it is now. Yes, it's *Love in the Afternoon*. They (Columbia, I think) call you to say, "Mr Wilder, we have good news. You may remember a film called *Love in the Afternoon*?" I say certainly I remember that film. "We may remake it." "How are you going to do it?", I ask: "It will be difficult. There is no Hepburn, Bogart or Holden." They say, "You will get \$2,500 now and when we make the picture you will get \$25,000." I tell them, "You must be crazy!" They said they would think about it, so I said, "While you are thinking remember that Mr Eszterhas just got \$3 million for *Natural Instincts*, I mean *Basic Instinct*, three million dollars, do you hear?" Then I hung up. They called again and I got them up to \$100,000. I finally said, "Look, whatever I am going to get, half will go to the widow of I. A. L. Diamond, with whom I worked." We worked together for years, you know.

SB: What I want to ask you is why you should not be involved in some way in the remaking of 'your' movies. I know why, but it still baffles me because the creator of these works is alive and kicking. All they are buying is a commodity from you.

BW: It's terrible what they are doing [in the film industry] right now. It's all special effects or mezzo-pornographic and I can't do those things. They are also afraid that I will demand things they don't agree with, afraid I'm going to make a fool of them. But I'd never do that, no matter how ignorant they are. I'm nice and gentle. Straight away, the head of the studio knows that Mr Wilder wants final cut; I tell them this, or my agent does, and then he calls me and says, "I didn't get very far."

But I don't care. I'm not all that eager anymore. There is nobody with whom I'm dying to work. There is just nobody around. Audrey Hepburn was the last one, and she is gone now. If you think of all the people who died - all the way down from Gary Cooper, Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, blah blah blah - and the women too. Now they talk about Harrison Ford like he was a great star. He would have been one of the crowd. Sitting on the bench, in the dugout, were people like Claude Rains, George Raft, Charles Laughton: all of that second string that came in when you were through with the leads. You know, when you need a little pause and you use them. Some great actors - there will never be another Claude Rains or another Charles Laughton.

Today they would each have their own television series: you can imagine *The Claude Rains Show* for 20 weeks. We just did not know what we had. I'm just one of those unfortunate bridges that goes way back - to 1934 when I came to America. I'm looking at what it is like today, at the cruelty of it. If you make a picture you work and slave at it - and it's a year and a half if you are a serious picture maker - and if this picture does not make a certain amount of money over the first weekend - say \$12 million

- they don't advertise it anymore, they don't want to know and you're down in the dumps. But if there is a picture that surprisingly only cost \$8 million and is a hit, then come double pages. (I'm so sick of seeing double pages.) "Terrific, never saw a better picture." But if you look below you see it is the *Cucamonga Register* or something. Not great reviewers, but splashed in the double pages. So I'm not all that bothered about making pictures now.

I'm having a very good time. I did a book. I did it in German and now it has come out in French, Italian and Spanish. And I'm going to do an enlarged version of that book. I have my little obsessions. I collect. I got \$34 million when I sold half of my art collection in 1989, when prices were at the top. You read all that stuff in the papers about prices but I thought they were bluffing with the estimates so I put in only the little things I bought. But I got \$34 million, of which I paid \$13 or \$14 million in tax. So I don't need to make movies anymore: I don't need the money. As my father used to say, "Kid, you can't eat platinum noodles." I've got enough to keep me interested. As long I have luncheons with good people like you and spend time with some of my friends. As long as I've got the rent money and food money for my daughter, grand-daughter and great grand-daughter (of which I have one).

SB: I just regret the circumstances don't allow someone of your talent to make a movie.

BW: I could say I don't regret it.

SB: You may not regret it, but I do.

PK: Many others too.

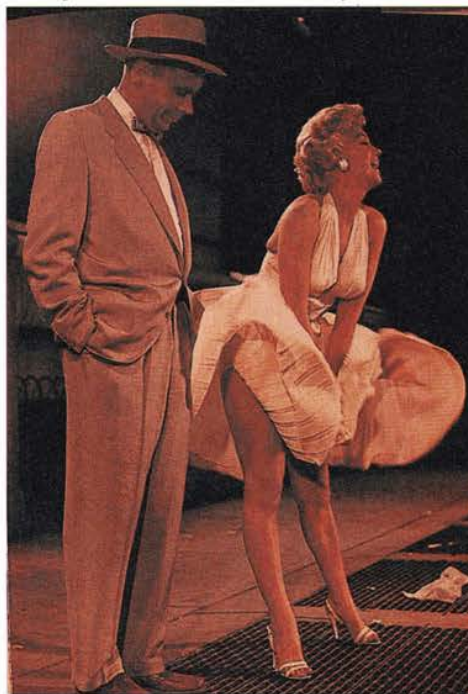
BW: You are all so very kind. You English have always been very wonderful to me. I remember the BFI gave me an award. One day I get a page from the *London Observer*: they had been asking directors who is the best director in their eyes. And I (I'm a very modest man, you know), I came out on top. My friend Mr David Lean ran my 'election' there. Some very good directors were being discussed and someone said, "I would vote for Wilder but he's dead." Mistake. Thank God I was not dead.

SB: There was a foreign director who got the Academy Award last year and said, "I don't believe in God, I believe in Billy Wilder."

BW: It was a Spaniard, Fernando Trueba. I was just mixing myself a Martini and I heard it on the television. The bottle of gin falls out of my hand. Some friends were there and I said, "Did you hear that? God? Put me in the class of D. W. Griffith or Murnau, but God?"

SB: I think it is only proper.

BW: Pat, my dear, it was absolutely wonderful to meet you. Let's talk again about films and about the Eameses. Saul, it is always wonderful to see you. I can't thank you enough for this wonderful luncheon and good conversation. It has been delightful talking about movies with people who care about them. It would be lovely to stay longer. There is so much to talk about. I believe that film-makers have not even begun to scratch the surface of what film can do - there are so many possibilities. But I'm late already and I have an appointment before I have to get back to finish a script. You see, I do still enjoy writing the scripts, it's just the producers who won't let me do what I want with them.



'The Seven Year Itch': Tom Ewell and Marilyn Monroe

MARTIN SCORSESE BETWEEN

GOD AND THE

GOODFELLAS



● *A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese through American Movies*, a three-part TV anthology of movie clips, is a cornucopia of rare gems, pristine prints and snappily spot-on comments (*Ars celare artem*: art that disguises its art). Though Scorsese is filmed as a respectably blue-suited talking head, his dark deep eyes, fast keen rap and quick sharp tight smiles rivet us all right. His gimlet insights and bold swipes start thoughts in many directions.

From his movie-brat image, you might expect a wild harvest of guilty pleasures. And the BFI's blurb for the programmes leads on "personal" (a word now regaining lost ground from "political"). However, though Scorsese doesn't come on like "the judgment of history", or the voice of God or tomorrow morning's opinion poll, his selection suggests a solid consensus to me.

He stresses non-auteurial creation by "the system": producers as poets, teamwork, studio policies, genres, restlessly changing audience demands. The key auteurs he divides into "storytellers" (such as John Ford) who work with the system and make it work for them, "illusionists" (such as DeMille and Borzage) whose cinematic virtuosity serves their poetic vision, "smugglers" (Sirk, Nicholas Ray) who insert their social criticisms quietly, and "iconoclasts" (Griffith, Stroheim, Kubrick) who defy the system, or change it. In which class would he put himself? It's a rough-hewn system of distinctions, worth arguing with forever.

He starts with a touch of autobiography, and that bad-taste thunderclap *Duel in the Sun* (David O. Selznick, 1946), a totem movie for him as for me. To see it was his mother's first defiance of the Catholic Church, and to take him with her. Soon afterwards, in London E17, it strengthened my schoolboy revolt – not revolt exactly, but respectful dissent – from edifying influence: from Grammar School Eng. Lit., from

"There's action only if there's danger," says Martin Scorsese in his three-part personal history of the American movies, to be screened on Channel 4. What kind of action and danger fascinate him? What kind of movie history has he made?

By Raymond Durnat

Roger Manvell's Pelican Book, *Film* (with its WEA spirit, and Intelligence Test halfway through), and from Richard Winnington's weekly film reviews in the left-liberal *News Chronicle*, where his Marxist/social-realist criteria, so cleverly telegraphed to fit those paper-shortage days, impressed everybody (Gerald Kaufman, the upper-class lads of *Sequence*, me). But *Duel* proved on my pulses that good taste is not enough by itself; that you need bad taste also, or rather several kinds of each, one for each subculture you're tangling with; and that most of these bad tastes, though they'd fail Dr Manvell's Intelligence Test, have their own aesthetic subtleties and psycho-moral refinements. (More recently this lurid old melo half-opened the eyes of Laura Mulvey to some large blind spots in her deplorably influential theories, in which Hollywood structured its heroines for "the male gaze".)

Scorsese's bad taste is fauve and intelligent. Consider his response to *Colorado Territory* (Raoul Walsh, 1949), in which the lamentable miscasting of Virginia Mayo, as a chunky clone of *Duel*'s dusky Amazon Jennifer Jones, goaded me (with "cultural discrimination" still gnawing at my mind) to see the film as genre stereotype. Scorsese, less suspicious, perceives in Joel McCrea's night vigil not just the genre requirement, anxiety-suspense, but a finer, deeper, more unusual nuance: spiritual acceptance.

At the end of the day, I hope, Scorsese's stop-at-nothing sympathies converge with my (ultra-traditional) humanism. "*Humani nihil a me alienum puto* (Nothing human is foreign to me)," as Terence said, circa 150 BC, and as I would mutter to myself whenever educated film appreciators scorned a movie for its moments of truth to attitudes deemed old-hat, vulgar, or populist in SW1 or NW3 (from which E17 was remoter than NY's Little Italy, since "Intelligent Literature" had noticed it, but not us). Today, to

be sure, the intelligent classes cultivate their bad tastes lovingly, like garden gnomes. We study obscure nuances of schmaltz, kitsch, deadpan-ironic-therefore-subversive and so-bad-that-it's-good, and some of us are now so depraved as not merely to tolerate but to appreciate "those dreadful middlebrows" so loathed by Virginia Woolf. But Scorsese's love of movie fabulation is at once knowing, gut-instinct sincere and tirelessly sensitive.

The publicity handout warns us that his "genuinely personal" choice "doesn't always follow the trails blazed by orthodox film historians" and includes "the unsung B movies in despised or undervalued genres". That'll do in a blurb, but may reinforce some popular fallacies at which it's worth chipping away. Especially the idea of *One Orthodoxy* from which only a "brat" would dare to stray: whereas I think there are many orthodoxies, and that Scorsese's is more mainstream than most.

Whereas some film cultures crave classroom respectability and worry about our pleasures and desires, others, like rock culture, are mainly *truant* cultures, as movies were for me. As for Scorsese, the culture vultures and consciousness-raisers hardly even got to him, until far too late: no truant from respectability, he certainly liked what many others liked.

Picture-palaces, for both of us, I think, were not unlike supermarkets for dreams: canned

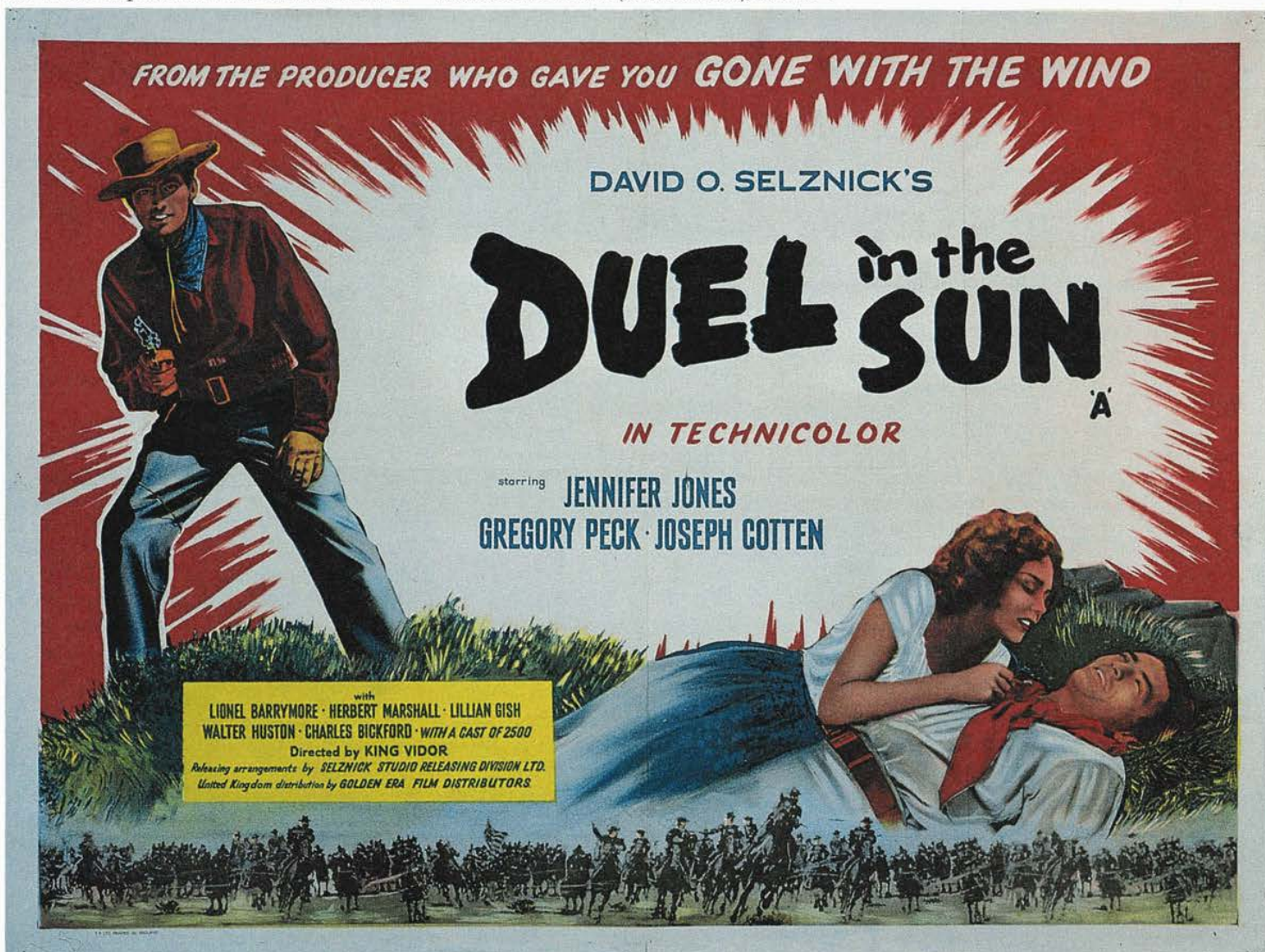
and semi-standardised, to be sure, but you chose the kinds you fancied, and mixed them around with other, real-life experiences, including highly personal ones. We made our personal selections, *within* a particular culture.

Scorsese's choice here suggests a temperamental bias: toward strong, violent, edgy scenes, with killings, face-slappings and confrontations – melodramatic forms of the abrasive personal relations of his own films. Yet he rarely strays from a well-beaten path.

He shows us his childhood guide, *Pictorial History of Movies*, by Deems Taylor *et al.* It's a lower-middlebrow picture-book, a best-seller in its day, with sensible captions (and no Intelligence Test). It shares its happy catholicity with a mighty influence on me, *The Movies*, published some years later, with even bigger pictures and a deceptively easy-reading text. *The Movies* is actually first-rate market sociology, a collaboration between Richard Griffith, the MOMA film historian, and Arthur Mayer, the canny art-film distributor-exhibitor. Their joint line runs close to Scorsese's here. As for his favourite genres (*noir*, Westerns, gangsters, musicals), when did highbrows not sing their praises?

His other affinity is with his near-contemporaries, the auteurist generation. Most of his "names" found favour with *Cahiers* circa 1958, Andrew Sarris and *Movie*, and their younger brothers, like *Cinema* (San Francisco), *Cinema* ▶

Warring extremes:
Is redemption the common tie between DeMille's 'The Ten Commandments' (1956), far left, and Scorsese's own 'Cape Fear', left, with its "crucified" and terrifying protagonist played by Robert De Niro? Below, the poster for 'Duel in the Sun', the film which Scorsese's mother defied the Catholic Church by going to see



In his three-part series, Scorsese celebrates the creativity of the studio system, but that doesn't prevent him from cherishing auteurs. He separates them out in terms of a number of categories, each of which is represented here: from left to right, 'Stagecoach' by John Ford the "storyteller"; 'Seventh Heaven' by Frank Borzage the "illusionist"; 'All that Heaven Allows' by Douglas Sirk the "smuggler"; and 'Broken Blossoms' by D. W. Griffith and 'Barry Lyndon' by Stanley Kubrick, two "iconoclasts"



◀ (Cambridge), and 1001 little magazines who between them transformed film criticism. No doubt early auteurs shortchanged many directors who had peaked too long before, like Walsh, Frank Borzage and DeMille, but Scorsese, celebrating them here, is only extending the same principle (and their movies grace many North American college courses). As for Scorsese's non-auteurist topics, many auteurs – Sarris, for example – thoroughly understood them; and the AFI re-insisted that movies are "the collaborative art". Isn't Scorsese's exhortation – "Study the old masters!" – the very spirit of orthodoxy? I've heard much further-out ideas pour out from such ace academics as Manny Farber and J. P. Gorin.

It's not, I think, that Scorsese, mellow with age and experience, is now reconciled with his patriarchal tradition, but rather that he *always* respected movie dreams, like his fellow "brat" Coppola. They weren't iconoclasts at all, in the usual sense, but icon-lovers. They wanted better, brighter, subtler dreams, freed from Hollywood limitations (in sensitivity and realism). Their "new American cinema" wasn't destruction, but rejuvenation. It fused Hollywood expertise with authentic, edgy Americana, long marginalised in Hollywood, though not banished altogether. After all, Paddy Chayevsky's *Marty* (1955) is a "reverse angle" on *Mean Street* territory. And Scorsese's early movies are pretty well what realists like Winnington prescribed.

I wonder too about the blurb making Scorsese a dry formalist. "What he responds to is film itself: the... fullest use of the medium's potential." This sounds a bit chaste to me, since he insists on movies heightening emotions. His hard-driving voice, as he outlines the films' stories for us, conveys an urgent sympathy for their action, a sympathy which is positively un-Brechtian and anti-deconstruction. The name of his game is not alienation, but empathy. Where alienated critics choose to see only coded stereotypes, he discerns *experiences*, abstracted from reality, yet heightened, and woven into a stylised yet illuminating logic: movies as "fables". His part-surveys of favourite genres stress swift and restless change in parallel with audience thinking (that's to say, social history);

this avoids two easy extremes: pop trendology and structuralist stereotypology

His bias towards action genres and directors, with their conservative styles, and their harder, sterner, emotional emphases, is generational too. *Cahiers* celebrated Hitchcock, a petty-bourgeois Catholic with solid Victorian values, and Hawks, a bald-eagle WASP geared to streamline macho, work-ethic-male-bonding, and matching dames. Another *Cahiers* faction upheld a muscular aesthetic/ethic, personified by Charlton Heston (the thinking man's Conan, the muscle-man's Moses). Pierre Kast, an early *Cahiers* quasi-Marxist, linked Raoul Walsh's use of Technicolor with Pascalian Jansenism: its moral angle was stern choice. Even the Douglas Sirk cult (cult then, orthodoxy long since) owed much to his films' hard, glossy shine.

Not that the shift was all-exclusive. These stern young men swooned at Ophüls' Proustian nostalgias, for his heartbroken heroines, while Scorsese, just like *Movie*, adored Vincent Minnelli. But the overall shift was there; the young, masculine critics, in mood for contest, simply exaggerated the more general movie-market change away from the traditional "family audience", with its gentler, softer, age- and sex-balanced tastes, towards harder attitudes.

This "tectonic shift" affected critics and auteurs alike. Around 1950, *Sequence* had warmed to the "humanist" John Ford, of *They Were Expendable* (1945), about violence as calm stoic duty. The 60s auteurs preferred his *The Searchers* (1956), which highlights Wayne's loony atrocities, like Peckinpah after him. Things have got still tougher since. Jim Kitses, in a memorable phrase, called Peckinpah "the bastard son of John Ford". The bastard son of Martin Scorsese would be Tarantino, who solicits *Beavis and Butthead*-type responses (snickering irony, complicity, sardonic shock).

Scorsese's tough edge may have a personal slant: he was an asthmatic child, and asthmatics understand convulsive deaths. More general causes include not "sexual repression" by "society" but obscurer frustrations, of purpose, adventure, responsibility. (Violence is the lowest form of autonomous action.) The action, not the violence, attracts another, aesthetic

interest. Most of these "old masters" are action directors, maestros of the visual-physical (*mise-en-scène*, landscape-with-movement, rhythm-and-space, muscular choreography). It's not just the form: it's form with spirit.

The compilation's array of styles presents them more sharply than whole films (the extracts contrast with one another, and the story hasn't time to engross us). Here I could fully share, for the first time, some fine art colleagues' pleasure in DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* (1956) for its parallels with colour-field paintings, and in Hawks's *Land of the Pharaohs* (1955), whose pyramid-building landscapes have a naive realism somehow akin to Science Museum dioramas. Scorsese calls them "documentary", a usefully contentious point. True, they're not "documentary footage" in the usual movie sense; but aren't museum dioramas documentary images, of realities?

Some of us (call us "Art Realists"?) prize works of art primarily as windows on "other realities" (other experiences, other minds...). Others (call them "Aesthetes"?) delight in art for its own unique experience: "The Show's the thing." Yet these opposites may cover the same ground. For the "other realities" must appear *within* a Show. And a Show can pack extra punch from resonance with real-life experience. At first I took Scorsese for a pure realist, on the strength of *Boxcar Bertha*, *Mean Streets*, *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* and *Taxi Driver*. But then *The Last Waltz*, *New York, New York* and *King of Comedy* showed his Janus face. (And even amidst his early "ethnic realist" shorts, *The Big Shave* is a joke-illusion: that's to say, a Show.)

I suppose action sequences make stronger snippets, and a better Show, than subtler fare. But I'd expected more about screen inspirations to Scorsese's realism, and his highly-strung dramatic finessing. (He gives us Cassavetes but not Chayevsky; and the one foreign film is *Cabiria*, way back in 1914.) But he rarely zeroes in on personal influences or special affinities. When he does, we get some fine surprises. As an inspiration for *New York, New York*, would you believe, a 1949 Doris Day musical, *My Dream Is Yours*? (Would the most brilliant intertextualist have sussed that, and if so how could he have proved



ALL PICTURES BY STILLA, POSTERS AND DESIGNS

it rigorously? But once you've heard it from Scorsese, it fits. Doris Day, derided as "whole-some" by 'sophisticated' critics, was actually the smiling face of Middle America's power women [like Debbie Reynolds: "The angel - with spurs"]. The cinefeminist idea that 50s screen heroines lacked power arguably merits Kleinian interpretation: the daughter's repressed envy of the mother's breast, redirected against her "successful" rival for it, the father.

Scorsese disregards political correctness, except perhaps for a homage to Ida Lupino, probably overdue, and for treating Sirk's decently liberal dramas as "subversive melodramas". It's odd how dramas aimed primarily at women are now called "melodramas", especially by feminists. Where does "drama" end and "melo" begin? Why is drama a disavowed genre? As Scorsese says: "There's action only if there's danger. To stay alive or die - that is our greatest drama!" But that emphasis on danger also 'suppresses' drama, by merging it with action melodrama, the violence genre for men. And does this caveman (or caveperson) sentiment confuse emotion with adrenalin?

Ideologically, Scorsese looms as a liberal Democrat, somewhere between JFK's "Camelot" (Shamalat, rather) persuasion, as personified by the improbable dreamboat of a rancher in *Alice*, and the funkier, darker, very cynical Democratic strain expressed on screen by Billy Wilder and Robert Aldrich. Aldrich's *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955) is Scorsese's specimen of *film noir*, instead of the more sentimental Chandler or Hammett. (My review tape of *Personal Journey* had shots of *Kiss Me Deadly* hitherto censored in Britain, of a tortured woman's naked legs, and insinuatingly nasty they are.)

Might Scorsese's subtending inspiration be the contradiction between Little Italy realities and Hollywood-stirred dreams? Or are the major tensions within his "roots"? Recall, in *Italianamerican*, his mother slapping and battering the dough for her family's pizza pie, a metaphor for energy, brutal, wilful, generous, convivial. Like Scorsese's conversation-scenes: tireless, insistent, abrasive, with battering-ram repetitions and crowbar questions.

The action-melo extracts bring out some-

thing easily overlooked: how Hollywood heroes mix violence and sensitivity, in volatile ways, from Jimmy Cagney's staccato jauntiness to Burt Lancaster, repeating similar gestures, but in an eerily soft, floating way.

It's as if the "movie brats" had learned not just the Old Masters' secrets, but their deeper vitalism, mixing these with their own, new vision. 70s mean-street-cred: reinvigorated realism.

Their psychology is neither Freudian, nor 'literary' like Henry James; it's about gut instincts, in interpersonal action. The lovers of *Duel* shoot each other to death; Scorsese's wear each other down, as their rough-and-ready dreams collide. Coppola adopts a loftier tone. His deep theme, perhaps, is elective loyalty amidst ambient confusion - whether in Vietnam, or between Rain People. Both men pioneered Hollywood's new, Hi-NRG sensitivity. (Was its first practitioner Elia Kazan?)

This NRG is part-materialistic, for it's physiological, of the nerves and glands, the animal body, like a boxer's reflexes or bionic workouts, or chemical aids to happy thought. But it's partly mental, idealistic, even spiritual (like willpower, determination, a driving dream). So DeMille's religion gets Scorsese's respect: "You cannot break the Ten Commandments - or they will break you!" DeMille and indeed The Old Testament both experience God as Energy, whose Moral Laws must operate as pitilessly as the Laws of Thermodynamics.

And Scorsese says it: his *Personal Voyage* pursues Spirituality. This may well run counter to much film culture, which is materialist, rationalist and sociocentric. Yet I must confess I've learned more about films from intensely spiritual writers - Bazin, Agel and Paul Schrader - than from Marxist writing (unless illumined by Surrealism, and that's got "supernaturalist" tendencies). Is it because Christian theories strive to be sensitive, whereas Marxists like to be reductionist? Or because film form is visual-physical, which means material, which makes materialists lazy but inspires Christians to patient explorations for their ineffable? A key to Scorsese's films is the "Christian atheist" book *Transcendental Style In Film*, by Paul Schrader. Schrader is co-auteur of *Taxi* (about

righteous evil, or Everyman as Evil), *The Last Temptation of Christ* and *Raging Bull* (a boxer's fighting spirit becomes spiritual, and he rehearses recitations of Brando, Schulberg and Kazan: an Eng. Lit. Text as a Show).

This NRG overlap between *élan vital* and moral energy returns us to *Duel*, and its three "possessed" auteurs: Selznick running on benzedrine and *amour fou* for its star, her rangy and nervous beauty (the visual-physical is the metaphor for spirit), and Vidor's transcendentalism, avowedly close to Christian Science. Which *Duel*'s vicious *liebestod* might utterly negate, and for Vidor that's the challenge. The closing image, of a miraculous desert flower, is fertility-religious: pagan-transcendental. But it's also moral, like DeMille: it celebrates the heroine's duty, not just to personal revenge, *Cape Fear*-style, but to moral crusade.

Borzage and Scorsese may epitomise two facets of Italian American Catholicism. Borzage, a romantic poet of underclass people (and another Scorsese passion), pursues a rhapsodic lyricism of "the tender couple". Scorsese pursues his "realist intimism" of masculine aggression, with his rich and weird mixtures of loneliness and gregariousness, touchiness and tolerance (which women struggle to mollify, or absorb, or in *After Hours* to reciprocate). Sometimes religious artists can understand - as sociocentric rationality cannot - gut instinct, libido, the everyday madness of *GoodFellas*.

Scorsese says he wanted to be a priest, until movies shanghaied his soul. And perhaps they're an ideal medium for "the redemption of physical reality" by an immanent vision.

American religion in film would be a worthwhile study - just how difficult, I should know. I once proposed that William Wellman (another of Scorsese's Old Masters) would be an Old Yankee puritan, on the strength of *Public Enemy*, *Strange Incident* (aka *The Ox-Bow Incident*), *Yellow Sky* and *Track of the Cat*. Whereupon I was regaled with industry stories: it seems he never went on location without bringing along an entire brothel, to keep his unit very happy.

'A *Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese through American Movies*' is screened on Channel 4 on 21 May, 28 May and 4 June

JAPAN:

SEX

AND BEYOND

The Japanese sex-film industry has attracted political radicals and is defended by the likes of film-maker Oshima. What kinds of directors work in it? What kinds of films have been made? And what is the significance of the 'bara eiga' film? Tony Rayns explains



Many directors in many countries have got their start in movies by making sex films. Ask Francis Ford Coppola or Jonathan Demme – or for that matter Michael Winner. In Japan, as usual, it's the same but slightly different. Japan is the only country in which the sex-film industry has attracted not only aspiring directors but also leftwing radicals, anarchists and avant-gardists; it's also the only country in which a respected major film company with a 60-year history tried to stave off bankruptcy by turning to mass-production of porno films. Nowadays, Japan is one of the last countries left with a small circuit of porno cinemas; though most of the industry has switched to video, like everywhere else, there are still a few companies producing low-budget sex films, and a few cinemas showing them. And where but Japan can you find directors like Morita Yoshimitsu, Hiroki Ryuichi and Takahashi Banmei, who started out in porno films, moved on to major-studio films, and now choose to oscillate between the mainstream and the subculture?

Oshima Nagisa, who knows a thing or two about Japan's erotic traditions, was the first Japanese intellectual to come out in defence of porno movies. In a celebrated 1970 essay he championed former gangster Wakamatsu Koji, director of such films as *Violated Angels* (*Okasareta Byakui*, 1967), *Go, Go, Second-time Virgin* (*Yuke, Yuke, Nidome no Shoyo*, 1969) and *Sex-Jack* (1970); Oshima subsequently hired Wakamatsu to work as line producer on his own sex film *Ai no Corrida* (1976). Wakamatsu, born in a village in North-East Japan in 1936 and proud of his own peasant origins, is a radical libertarian who began making what were then called "eroductions" (erotic productions) in the mid-60s. He forged improbable alliances with such figures as the avant-garde theatre group leader Kara Juro and the Red Army Faction leader Adachi Masao, inviting them to write scripts and casting them as actors; he also produced several eroductions by Adachi.

Oshima's essay saw Wakamatsu's films as exemplary struggles against prejudice, giving voice to Japan's underclasses. Writing with typical candour, he admitted to "a dark excitement welling up in myself" while watching the climax of *Sex-Jack*, in which a cell of left-wing terrorists enjoy group sex on the "filthy grey matting of their room" as their political manifesto is read aloud on the soundtrack. What Oshima valued in eroductions in general and Wakamatsu's films in particular was their spirit of transgression: he noted that the 'outcast' status of the sex-film industry created a bond between film-makers, films and audiences unlike anything known in the mainstream, and that it was the timid, repressed and deeply conservative nature of the mainstream industry that had forced eroductions into existence.

The first eroductions were produced by tiny independent companies in the early 60s, just as the old studio system began to break down. In 1972, by which time eroductions had been codified into the genre known as *pink eiga* ("pink movies"), the Nikkatsu Company – Japan's oldest major, founded in 1912 – began production of what it called *roman-porno eiga* ("romantic-pornographic movies"); low-budget

sex films, generally 60-70 minutes in duration, designed to be shown in double or triple bills on the company's own theatre-circuit. Nikkatsu was no stranger to racy movies (its contract directors in the 50s and 60s had included Imamura Shohei and Suzuki Seijun) but its bold venture into porno production initially shocked the Japanese film establishment. Not for long, though. In 1974, Kumashiro Tatsumi's *roman-porno* film *The World of Geisha* (*Yojo-han Fusuma no Urabari*, 1973) topped the annual 'Ten Best' poll conducted by the film magazine *Kinema Junpo*, and Tanaka Noboru's *The True Story of Abe Sada* (*Jitsuroku Abe Sada*, 1975, reconstruct-



Into the light: Sato Toshiki's 'Tandem' (1994), left; Tanaka Noboru's baroque 'Stroller in the Attic' (1976), above

ing the same historical events shown in *Ai no Corrida*) featured on the list the following year. Japanese critics and the rest of the film industry were obliged to take these films seriously because they came with the Nikkatsu trademark on the front; but independent *pink eiga* were ignored, as they still are today.

Perverse and murderous

Kumashiro (who died in April) and Tanaka were the two most striking auteurs of the early years of *roman-porno* production, and both had a strong commitment to the genre. Kumashiro was essentially an anti-moralist, relishing the anarchic thrust of the human sex-drive and – like Wakamatsu – stirring up Japan's rigid social hierarchies by focusing on outcasts and misfits. Tanaka was more a baroque stylist, steeped in literary decadence; his best film is probably the extraordinary *Stroller in the Attic* (*Yaneura no Sanposha*, 1976, based on a story by Edogawa Ranpo), in which all the sex is perverse and murderous.

Nikkatsu, the last company in Japan to maintain the systems of recruitment by examination and apprenticeship to established directors, used the *roman-porno* genre to try out innumerable new directors and actively encouraged innovation. It was explicit corporate policy to allow directors to do what they liked between sex scenes on condition that the mandatory

four to five sex scenes were present. Ironically, this corporate liberalism hastened the company's decline in the late 80s: the directors of the *roman-porno* films of the mid-80s had such trouble taking the genre seriously that they alienated audiences and speeded up the shift from porno theatre-going to buying and renting porno tapes.

Nonetheless, an amazingly high proportion of the directors now active in the Japanese film industry got their start in *roman-porno* films. The long list includes Morita Yoshimitsu (best known for his social satire *The Family Game*/*Kazoku Game*, 1983), Kaneko Shusuke (a

consummate mainstream hack, but also director of the haunting *Summer Vacation 1999*/*1999-nen no Natsu Yasumi*) and Somai Shinji (whose art film *Typhoon Club*, 1985, remains a favourite of Japanese critics, if nobody else). But the only director to achieve real distinction in his sex-film period was Sudo Masayuki, now a director of hit comedies, whose debut feature *Abnormal Family: My Brother's Wife* (*Hentai Kazoku: Aniki no Yome-San*, 1983) was a brilliant porno pastiche of an Ozu movie, complete with Ozu-style framing and cutting and a cast that included Hara Setsuko and Ryu Chishu lookalikes.

Nikkatsu filed for bankruptcy protection some five years ago, and has been under receiver management ever since, virtually ending its role as a producer. The company's disappearance from the porno scene has left two remaining strata of porno production. First, there are the handful of small independent companies making *pink eiga* and their gay male variants, known as *bara eiga* ("rose movies", named after the now-defunct gay magazine *Barazoku*: "Family of the Rose"). Second, there are the countless video-production companies churning out porno tapes. Japan being Japan, these types of production are rigidly distinct. *Pink eiga* and *bara eiga* have budgets of around US\$35,000 and are made in four or five days; they are distributed by companies like Shin-Toho, and exhibited in the few surviving ►

◀ straight and gay porno cinemas found in Japan's main cities. The videos are budgeted as low as possible, and never cost more than US\$10,000; they are shot in one or two days and distributed through a network of porno stores and second-hand book stores. *Pink eiga* and *bara eiga* are released on tape when they've had theatrical distribution, but there's no real crossover between the two levels of production.

The only director of porno videos who also makes features is Mochizuki Rokuro, whose admirable debut feature *Skinless Night* (1991, named after a brand of Japanese condoms) is about a porno-video director hankering for the chance to direct an art movie. One of Mochizuki's projects is a feature about the men who appear (for much lower pay than the women) in straight porno videos, but he meanwhile divides his time between producing or directing tapes for his own small company and directing entertainingly sleazy features about a dissolute sports journalist for the Daiei Motion Picture Company. Mochizuki, like the protagonist of *Skinless Night*, was born just too late to have the chance of entering Nikkatsu as an apprentice. He opted for the porno video route after working on a few *pink eiga*, concluding that video production made it easier for him to be his own boss.

Most *pink eiga* and *bara eiga* are ambition-free zones, but four prolific directors in the field have been nicknamed "The Four Devils" because they turn the genre to their own more or less subversive ends. Three of them – Sato Toshiki, Sano Kazuhiro and Zeze Takahisa – make only straight *pink eiga*; the fourth, Sato Hisayasu, has also made one foray into gay male sado-masochism with *Lunatic Theatre* (*Kurutta Butokai*, 1988, also known as *Muscle*), framed as a crazed *homage* to Pasolini. These guys enjoy modest underground reputations, primarily among student critics, but the adventurous production/promotion company Stance has subtitled some of their films in an attempt to bring them to international attention. They and their films made their first appearances outside Japan at the Rotterdam Film Festival last January, where they sold out every show and gave provocative answers to audience questions.

Tight schedules and budgets

The *pink eiga* shown in Rotterdam are all cousins-once-removed to the kind of Japanese indies made outside the porno sector. Zeze Takahisa's *No Man's Land* (1991) demonstrates the continuing appeal of early Godard movies to independent-minded directors the world over: a hit-man, a petty thief and a rootless young woman lurch through sexual and romantic complications against a backdrop of media coverage of the Gulf War. Sato Hisayasu's *An Aria on the Gaze* (*Shisenjiyo no Aria*, 1992) is a minimalist sci-fi variation on Kawabata's story *The House of Sleeping Beauties*: a brothel of drugged women, video surveillance, masks and murder. And Sato Toshiki's *Tandem* (1994) is a contribution to the unending cycle of *Chikan Densha* (*Misbehaviour on Trains*) movies, founded on the well-known myth of furtive sexual gropers in the rush-hour crush on Tokyo commuter trains; Sato's film, an elaborate 'odd couple' sce-

Watching them evokes a parallel universe in which Roger Corman sexploitation productions can be gay or bi as well as straight

nario, rests on the moral equivalence of a young thug and an ageing salaryman who unwittingly exchange partners.

Watchable as these films are, their international audience is never going to be wider than a few curiosity seekers on the festival circuit. As art movies *maudits*, they fall well short of the standards achieved in other Japanese independent productions: limited by their impossibly tight schedules and budgets and constrained by their obligation to deliver protracted humping/groping scenes every so often. As sexploitation, though, they're left standing by the Japanese film and video industry's self-regulating censorship code, which still proscribes the showing of genitals – referred to with quintessential Japanese delicacy as "pubic hair" – in sexual contexts. (Thanks to Mapplethorpe photographs, *La Belle Noiseuse* and *Orlando*, amongst other recent cultural artefacts, it is now OK to show genitals in what are deemed non-sexual contexts.) In their different ways, such filmmakers as Paul Verhoeven and Peter Greenaway already go much further in sexual representations than any director of Japanese pornography can do.

The gay *bara eiga*, on the other hand, have what it takes to become an international phenomenon; all three examples shown in Rotterdam have been bought for UK distribution, with sales to other countries pending. These films, too, cannot measure up to American or French gay porn as sexploitation: they can't show the penis, erect or otherwise, except through straining Calvin Klein underwear, and the 'cum-shots' deemed essential in US hardcore are conspicuously absent. But no equiva-



After Godard: Zeze Takahisa's 'No Man's Land' (1991)

lent films are being made anywhere else in the world, which makes them rather special. Watching them evokes a parallel universe in which Roger Corman sexploitation productions can be gay or bi as well as straight.

Bara eiga were launched in 1983 by Nakamura Genji, once an assistant to Wakamatsu Koji and later a director of straight *roman-porno* for Nikkatsu. His *Beautiful Mystery: The Legend of Big Horn* (*Kyokon Densetsu*) is a riotous gay farce in which a young man innocently working out in a gym is invited to join the private army of a famous writer/demagogue and whisked off to a military-style boot camp where he is tied up and buggered by his room-mate. Soon enraptured by the daily and nightly regimen of gay orgies, he oversleeps one morning – thereby missing the leader's failed attempt to incite the Japan Self-Defence Force to rebellion and his consequent suicide by *seppuku*.

The film, in other words, is an extremely disrespectful parody of Mishima Yukio and his "Shield Society": an amazing achievement in a culture which is still so nervous about Mishima that it has neither produced an analytical biography nor permitted the release of Paul Schrader's biopic. We have it on excellent authority (Donald Richie, John Nathan) that there was nothing gay at all about the Shield Society; in reality, Mishima kept his adventures into gay aesthetics and rough trade rigorously separate from his quasi-imperialist role-playing. But Nakamura's film prefers the gay-bar legend to the fact, and manages to generate much erotic pleasure while demolishing the high-mindedness of Mishima's pretensions. I doubt that any other new genre has ever been launched with more flair.

Sex, death, crime and power

Sato Hisayasu's foray into gay S/M, as noted above, is rooted in the director's love for Pasolini – a love signalled by the fact that the protagonist spends much of the film searching for a multi-system VTR to watch his PAL tape of *Salò*. *Lunatic Theatre* centres on a muscle-mag editor who gets involved with a guy who turns out to be an unrelenting sadist; tired of being tortured, he takes a samurai sword to his dark lover, severing an arm. This being a love story, our hero eventually mutilates himself to be on an equal footing with his armless nemesis. The film has less to do with *bara eiga* in general than with Sato's – what shall we say? – *idiosyncratic* take on sex, death, crime and power in relationships. It seems likely to remain a one-off.

The most original new sensibility in *bara eiga*, though, is the avant-garde film-maker Oki Hiroyuki, who made his first 35mm film for the gay-porn circuit last year. Oki is a remarkable film-maker by any standards in the world, and the first in Japan to translate the confessional first-person aesthetic of the so-called "I-novel" (*shi-shosetsu*) into credible cinematic terms. His Super-8 features, *Swimming Prohibited* (Yuei Kinshi, 1989) and *Infection* (*Kankei*, 1990), chart the journeys of a troubled ego – not exactly Oki himself, but a persona that he enacts off-screen – travelling around Japan in search of... what? Enlightenment? Sex? Love? A way of exorcising memories? The unseen protagonist is very pre-

sent physically (he films his own arms and legs, masturbates, dips his fingers into pools) and editorially (he cruises schoolboys on the streets of small towns and questions them about their reactions to the onset of puberty), but we glean most of what we learn about him from the way he looks at people and places: the stares at attractive boys, the blur of passing landscapes, the grey views from hostel windows, the immaculate clutter of a small-town street.

Many of Oki's Super-8 and 16mm short films are framed as diaries; some form part of his ongoing *Matsumae-kun* series, which records his annual January visits to Matsumae, a small port in Hokkaido. *Melody for Matsumae Buddy* (*Matsumae-kun no Senritsu*, 1992), for instance, spans the days from 3 to 12 January and documents days spent with – and without – a young lover. The film matches the presence/absence of its ostensible subject with a shifting sense of authorial presence/absence in a way that is, to the best of my knowledge, unique in world cinema. The first four days all begin the same way, with shots of the lover posing in front of the bridge over the town's river; we are made aware of Oki's voyeuristic consciousness behind the camera from the start, through the play with exposure, the fetishistic details, the hints of eroticism.

But the "7 January" chapter begins differently and thereby immediately asserts the authorial presence more strongly, an assertion confirmed soon after by an interior shot of a hotel room floor with Oki's own legs in the frame. The lover departs on a bus in the "8 January" chapter, and the last four days covered in the film show the town without him. Oki at first attempts to 'replace' his missing boyfriend, setting the camera running and appearing himself in front of it, smoking, 'dancing' or playing with his cock. But the last three days are limited to grey skies, grey townscapes and snowy landscapes: a succession of shots 'dramatising' the boyfriend's absence. The effect is almost unspeakably poignant.

Incandescent refusal

Elsewhere in his short films, Oki makes equally sophisticated experimental play with patterns of expectation and frustration. *The Lips of August* (*Hachigatsu no Kuchibiru*, 1994), for instance, starts off as a portrait of a rough-looking boy with unusually sensual lips and then turns into a non-performance piece by Oki himself, setting up a bizarre dialectic between the camera (which turns remorselessly, carrying the burden of the viewer's expectations) and Oki, who sits in frame waiting for something to happen, defying the camera's and the audience's desire to see something.

In this and other films, Oki goes one stage beyond the cold, neutral stare of Warhol's camera, opening up that elusive area between viewer, camera and responsive subject. In the generally moribund context of present-day avant-garde cinema, this stuff seems almost incandescent in its refusal to obey the 'rules' of film's conventional subject/object grammar.

It was by no means inevitable that a filmmaker like Oki would try his hand at a *bara eiga*, but it's not entirely surprising either. This



"Queer Ambient Film": Oki Hiroyuki's 'I Like You, I Like You Very Much' (1994)

doubtless has something to do with the fact that Oki belongs to the first generation of Japanese this century who feel comfortable with being openly gay. In the event, Oki's feature *I Like You, I Like You Very Much* (*Anata-ga Suki Desu, Dai Suki Des*, 1994) represents a compromise of sorts between his own experimental aesthetic and the demands of the genre. Like all compromise, it's faintly uneasy, but it has produced an extraordinary and deeply moving film.

The chief concession to genre is the presence of a narrative. Yu and Shin are lovers in Kochi (the town in Shikoku where Oki himself currently lives). Yu is one day attracted to Taka, whom he spots on the platform of Kochi station; he follows him and tells him on the street that he like him very much. He repeats the phrase that night when he makes love with Shin. At college, Shin hears how his lover has been seen making overtures to a straight boy in public. He turns to his old friend Nori (played by Oki himself) for advice, and then provokes a crisis in his relationship with Yu by approaching Taka and urging him to reciprocate Yu's love. The lovers spend a night apart, Shin with Nori and his current boyfriend, and Yu being groped by strangers in the town's cruising park. They

are reunited next morning, and are having breakfast when Taka and his girlfriend jog past. Taka gives them a friendly wave.

Shooting on 16mm for blow-up to 35mm, Oki gives the film much the same 'look' as his experimental shorts: the camera is usually hand-held, there is much reframing, refocusing and adjustment to exposure, and many of the edits are in-camera. In the blow-up, this shooting style sometimes makes the film hard to watch – a problem that will be minimised when the film is released on video. The approach gives the film an undertow of Oki's characteristic concerns with light, landscapes, townscapes and passing glances at attractive boys. But the core of the film is the relationship between Yu and Shin, a romantic love story 100 per cent grounded in quotidian detail and sexual truths. The candour of the sex scenes, which stretch Japan's censorship code to the limit, seems to make the film hard for straight viewers to watch, but gay viewers have little trouble in recognising that something exceptional is reaching the screen: this may well be the first ever account of gay male life that finds 'drama' in the flickers of desire and emotion that each of us experiences every day.

I Like You, I Like You Very Much and Oki's earlier movie *Tarch Trip* (1993) moved above ground in October 1994 when both were given late-night runs at a popular art-house cinema in Shibuya, Tokyo's fashion centre for young people. They played (with considerable success) under the banner of "Queer Ambient Film". Only in Japan could a marriage of the porno subculture and the avant-garde achieve a breakthrough into the area of hip pop culture. It suggests that there'll be plenty more surprises to come from Oki... and from *bara eiga* in general.

Names throughout are in the Japanese order: surname first. Grateful thanks to Image Forum, Stance Company and Oki Hiroyuki for help in writing this article. 'I Like You, I Like You Very Much', 'Lunatic Theatre' ('Muscle') and 'Beautiful Mystery' will be released on video by Dangerous to Know

**Only in Japan
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MORE THAN

● To inside observers, Australian cinema suddenly seems strangely bifurcated. Currently, outside Australia, this national cinema is perceived mainly through the filter of its two most recent success stories: Stephan Elliott's *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* and P. J. Hogan's *Muriel's Wedding*. Commentators everywhere – including some inside Australia – seize on these two, recall Baz Luhrmann's *Strictly Ballroom* (1992), and believe they have identified a new, distinctively Australian genre. Sometimes called “kitsch comedy”, this genre was well characterised by the title of a recent survey article in the Australian media magazine *Metro*: “Drag, Dags and the Suburban Surreal”.

This undoubtedly captures something real and enduring in Australian popular culture: a cheekiness, a sexual titillation, a kind of comic satire which ‘levels’ all social classes and their pretensions. The appeal to British audiences of this “suburban surreal” comes as no surprise given the popularity in both countries of the man who virtually invented it decades ago: Barry Humphries.

But in 1995, Australian cinema is starting to look somewhat different to its local audiences. The fad for the gaudy is being replaced by the return to seriousness. The trend could even be described as a “return home”, the title of a quiet, small, very Australian film made by Ray Argall in 1989 which was embraced by local critics, but not much noticed elsewhere. It was about a man who flees the teeming city of Melbourne to return to his original home base, a quiet suburb in Adelaide, about reclaiming one's family “roots”, and especially about the dawn of a soft, “New Age” masculinity to replace the brutal “ocker” stereotype of the past.

ORIGINAL SINS

Two new films, Richard Franklin's *Hotel Sorrento* and Margot Nash's *Vacant Possession*, take up this motif, both posing questions of “origin” and home in a wider and more urgent way than Argall's film. *Hotel Sorrento* is the less successful or inspiring of the two. Franklin's career has taken a curious turn with this project. Once mythologised by cinephiles as the under-appreciated “popular artist” par excellence of Australian film – his understanding of classic American cinema so deep that he ended up in the States making *Psycho II* (1983) – Franklin returns home to adapt a highly respected and respectable work of Australian theatre by Hanne Rayson.

In many ways, *Hotel Sorrento* returns local audiences to the moment of the Australian cinema's 70s “renaissance”, which followed a long, arid period of relative non-production (certain rediscovered classics notwithstanding: John Heyer's *The Back of Beyond*, 1954, Charles Chauvel's *Jedda*, 1955). Like the key films of that renaissance – Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), Gillian Arm-

strong's *My Brilliant Career* (1979) – *Hotel Sorrento* is about capturing a “spirit of the land” (here a bay-side holiday town rather than the outback) and defining a national identity. It is a self-conscious return to a slightly creaky form of ‘Highbrow’ cinema – characters loll about, converse, discover each other's finer selves, as in the Canadian film *The Company of Strangers* or Mike Newell's *Enchanted April*. Possibilities for melodrama are delicately side-stepped, with key events occurring off-screen.

Hotel Sorrento tackles something often worried over in the Australian media: expatriatism. Meg (Caroline Goodall), an expatriate novelist living in London, has written a harsh autobiographical book about her formative years in Australia, called *Melancholy*. When she returns home to face her two sisters (Tara Morice and Caroline Gillmer) and her crusty old Dad (Ray Barrett), all the skeletons are let loose from the closet. Yet this family drama is really only a metaphor for the issue of how Australians (expatriate or resident) might best define and come to terms with their national origin.

Like Rayson's original play, the film explores ambivalent attitudes to “home”. Is Australia – as many expatriates like to paint it – a “cultural wasteland”, or a model of a new world? How can modern Australians, especially women, reconcile within themselves the sometimes ugly historical legacies of the Australian male ethos, of artistic philistinism and political conservatism? How important is it to claim even a radically modified “Australianness”? Can the “melancholy” of this land be transmuted into a more soulful and optimistic “longing”?

Vacant Possession is also about a woman (the superb Pamela Rabe from *Sirens*) who returns home, this time to New South Wales. She too fights with her sister (Linden Wilkinson) over the fate of the family house, and struggles to deal with a father (John Stanton) who is not merely grouchy and emotionally unforthcoming, but in fact deeply disturbed and prone to violence. The abandoned house the heroine occupies has an aura of surrealist uncanny: it's also haunted, like the houses of horror cinema, with repressed memories taking shape and walking around.

In *Vacant Possession*, the circle of “home” widens

further. Where *Hotel Sorrento* focuses almost exclusively on cosy, educated, middle-class, white Australians, Nash's film attempts to dramatise Aboriginal ownership of the nation – an issue recently in the news with the groundbreaking “Mabo” legislation, which established crucial land-rights claims for Aborigines. The “vacant possession” of the title refers to white Australia's uneasy, even illegitimate, claim on this “home”, and the spiritual emptiness and emotional dysfunction which come with it.

Summarised like this, *Vacant Possession* may sound like a schematic, even politically correct tract, prompted by white, liberal guilt. Australian viewers of all colours have sore memories of the sorry fantasies visited upon this country by those jet-setting Germans Werner Herzog (*Where the Green Ants Dream*, 1984) and Wim Wenders (*Until the End of the World*, 1991) and even by the rather more celebrated Bruce Chatwin with his book *The Songlines* – all of which rehearse a similar sermon about the barrenness of “settler” culture in contrast with the richness of ancient, Aboriginal traditions.

Vacant Possession doesn't entirely escape from such problems, but it is an exciting, complex piece of cinema. It draws from a strong history of women's film-making in Australia. The imagery of a gothic house recalls Laurie McInnes' *Broken Highway* (1993), while the oneiric intermingling of white and black cultures evokes Tracey Moffatt's *Bedevil* (1993). But probably the film to which Nash's owes most is Susan Dermody's *Breathing Under Water* (1992), a feminist ‘essay film’ in the mode of Chris Marker's *Sunless*.

ORPHANS

As Tom O'Regan argues in his forthcoming book *Australian Cinema*, this national cinema is – like any other – diverse. There is no single project or zeitgeist to which local film-making conforms at any one time. So any tendency towards considering the problem of home seems immediately counterbalanced by films that loudly reject any thought of family, nationalism or origins: a kind of “orphan cinema” that defiantly draws its inspiration more from overseas models than local ones.

Michael Rymer's *Angel Baby* is a tale of streetwise amour fou in the vein of the French New Wave, an alternately ecstatic and depressive spectacle that evokes *Betty Blue*, *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf* and *Panic in Needle Park*. Its central characters (played by John Lynch and Jacqueline McKenzie) are misfits without family, home or jobs; psychologically disturbed, they meet at a clinic and instantly fall in love. They run from a cold society, but reality inexorably catches up.

Angel Baby belongs to another distinctly Australian tradition – an “internationalist” art-cinema



Kitsch comedy: P. J. Hogan's 'Muriel's Wedding'

MURIEL

WINTERKING FILMS



Woman with boa: Pamela Rabe, star of 'Sirens', in Margot Nash's 'Vacant Possession'

If 'Muriel's Wedding' and the controversial 'Romper Stomper' are both Australian, is the search for a unified national cinema misplaced? Adrian Martin reports from Australia

tradition led by the films of Ian Pringle, who made the German-Australian co-production *The Prisoner of St Petersburg* (1989), a downbeat comedy in the style of Wenders or Kaurismäki. As in *Vacant Possession*, surrealist influence is evident: Melbourne resembles the Paris of Breton's or Aragon's novels, and the lovers, reading secret messages into phrases from TV game shows, practise a dippy local variant on Dali's "paranoid criticism". But where Nash reveals national character through such free association, Rymer is more interested in dissolving it.

Geoffrey Wright's *Metal Skin*, his second film after the controversial *Romper Stomper* (1992), presents a different case again. Wright wishes to express the spirit of a particular part of Australia – the working class "western suburbs" of Melbourne. *Metal Skin* presents a particularly romantic image of this brutalising squalor – his characters live in hovels, hang out at industrial rigs and howl at the big bad city. The film is true melodrama, unashamedly so: dumb Joe (Aden Young) loves satanic Savina (Tara Morice) who loves rugged Dazey (Ben Mendelsohn) who loves sullen Roslyn (Nadine Garner) who just wants to be left alone. It's a volatile cocktail of lust, frustration and humiliation, with doses of black magic, multiculturalism and Aussie "car culture" only very loosely integrated into the plot.

Wright is one of many young Australian directors who publicly dismiss most locally-produced films for their "boring kitchen sink realism" or "lack of passion". His films owe virtually nothing, stylistically, to any previous Australian film. At their best, they exhibit a visceral cinematic energy absorbed from a pantheon of tough-guy directors – Scorsese, Kubrick, Ferrara, Woo – complete with showy jump cuts, strobe lighting and cacophonies of soundtrack noise. At its worst, *Metal Skin* collapses into the bombastic, hysterical nihilism of Oliver Stone's epics: the world is hell, life a prison, society irremediably sick.

A LACK OF ELAN?

Metal Skin revives an old argument in Australian film culture about how unspectacular, how unlike Hollywood blockbusters, our films generally are. For the generation that engineered the 70s renaissance, and who fought for a nationalistic cinema, this difference from Hollywood was and is something to be celebrated. Those linked to the reborn industry, such as Bob Ellis (writer of Phil Noyce's *Newsfront*, 1978) and Philip Adams (producer of the Bazza McKenzie comedies), applaud the national penchant for "recessive" loser-heroes (as in *Sunday Too Far Away*, 1974) and laconic, low-key narratives. Ellis invokes the natural landscape, the vast open spaces and the "tyranny of distance" (as one historian called it) between the major cities: "The country's too big for plots..." ▶



Three drag queens and a bus: Stephan Elliott's *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*

◀ In the 1980s, however, a new generation came to lament the absence of American-style élan from our movies, and the lack of those energies and influences that can seep from neighbouring areas of popular culture: music, fashion, comics and TV. This was a generation fired up by George Miller's *Mad Max* films (1979, 1981 and 1985) rather than *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. In particular, they regularly lamented that Australia had no thriving B cinema, that the government film institutions and official journals did not support attempts at making thrillers, horror films, musicals, vulgar comedies or outrageous melodramas.

But it wasn't only trash- and cult-movie specialists who wanted to see Australian cinema move a little closer to overseas models. Susan Dermody and Liz Jacka, authors of perhaps the most frequently cited study of contemporary Australian cinema (*The Screening of Australia*), remarked harshly that "the unconscious, the subjective, the marvellous, the disturbing, the cinematically literate" all seemed "off-limits" to our "tasteful, rather old-fashioned film storytelling". For them, Australian cinema needed a strong shot of both American élan and European art-cinema experimentation. More recently *The New Australian Cinema*, by Geoff Mayer and Brian McFarlane, severely faults both Australian and British cinemas for lacking a sense of melodrama and action, and the – pardon me – "vigorous narrative thrust" of American cinema.

BETWEEN NATURALISM AND THE TALL TALE

The frequent comparison with British and Canadian cinema suggests another more generous perspective. In a polemical exchange in a 1989 issue of the Canadian magazine *CineAction!*, Peter Harcourt responded strongly to Robin Wood's breezy dismissal of most Canadian and Australian cinema. Harcourt argued that Wood's critical position "cannot handle – except with contempt – any individual filmic articulation that does not refer in some way to a Hollywood genre," and that his work is unable to properly address either the "over-coded, over-fabulated cinema of Australia, Canada or Quebec".

Wood was kicking, as many Australian, Canadian, British or Dutch critics have done down the decades, against that "under-coded, under-fabu-

lated" – in other words dreary and unimaginative – character of certain national cinemas. Yet, if these pessimists were to cease pining for an "ideal" cinema according to Sirk, De Palma, Powell and Leone, they might find something unique and intriguing in their own backyard. The challenge is – as O'Regan forcefully argues – to grasp the pleasures offered by the routine films produced by national cinemas, rather than the exceptional ones.

With Australia, it's clear, in this "routine" light, that some of the best work has been done in an odd zone somewhere between naturalistic drama and the "tall tale", a style that's a mutation of the "poetic realism" that surges and falls away throughout international cinema history, based on a fond (and oh-so-slightly "fabulated") observation of everyday life, as in the films of Jacques Becker (*Antoine et Antoinette*, 1947).

This low-key poetic realism is common to Australian and British cinema, which helps explain the easy currency and popularity of some Australian films in the UK. There is a clear British influence on some of our best directors: on John Ruane's *Death in Brunswick* (1991) for instance, or the remarkable oeuvre of Brian McKenzie (*Kelvin and His Friends*, 1987, *Stan and George's New Life*, 1990) with its echoes of Mike Leigh's work. Such films deftly mix naturalistic observation – the mundanity or "dagginess" of ordinary lives – with sudden flights of fancy or bursts of frantic, knockabout action: a dead body that has to be disposed of, for example, or a bureau of meteorology that is sabotaged by an ageing, retrenched employee.

Perhaps what British audiences respond to in *Muriel's Wedding* is its quietly explosive combination of homeliness and rambunctiousness: its unyielding gaze at the ghastliness, the "muckiness" of suburban family life, mixed with an ultimate hard-won optimism, a strictly customised version of Hollywood's 'feel-good' formula.

Australian and British narratives also share a certain rhetoric of deflation, a laconic quality. A fragile utopianism may sometimes be allowed to fight its way through to the surface – in *A Letter to Brezhnev* as in Ruane's latest, *That Eye, The Sky* (1994) – but anything resembling Spielberg's strenuous sentimentality is avoided like the plague. Likewise,

"genre" film-making in Australia – as with police thrillers like John Dingwall's *The Custodian* (1993) – often deliberately pulls back from the explosive clinches and climaxes typical of American cinema. Clear-cut dénouements are underplayed, and the "moral lessons" of the drama left ambiguous. Even the Australian attempts at making bold, colourful musicals – *Strictly Ballroom* or before it Gillian Armstrong's *Starstruck* (1982) – have a downbeat quality, a poetic realism of rooftops and kitchens closer to the melancholy of Jacques Demy than the vibrancy of MGM in the 50s.

SOMETHING IS HAPPENING

Still, there's a good chance that Australia's diverse cinema is both under- and over-fabulated. As Peter Wollen has often demonstrated, "underground" currents of excess – camp, ornamentalism, medievalism, all the aesthetic sensibilities based on artifice and display – surface at surprising times and in unexpected ways in many national cultures. This is the significance of *Priscilla* – in truth, a rather artless film – and probably the key to its success in several countries. It marked an explosion of a "carnavalesque" tradition in Australian film. This tradition has its roots in local TV history; in such 60s comedians as Graham Kennedy, and the anarchic weekly programme *Hey Hey It's Saturday*.

Australians are often told, particularly by those who visit briefly and then write travel reports home, that their country is a "desert", a "land without history" or even a tacky "simulacrum" of more technologically advanced places elsewhere. There is currently a flourishing mini-tradition of distinguished short films – *Memories and Dreams*, *A Saucer of Water for the Birds*, *Motherland*, *The Illustrated Auschwitz* – which document Australia's multiculturalism by asking migrants (mostly of European origin) to recall what they experienced before coming here. We hear the most horrendous, traumatic, world-shattering tales: of war, religious persecution, scattered families, the concentration camps, forced exile. Once these tortured souls reach Australia, their stories end, and so do the films; home is the resting place, the place where (as David Byrne once sang of heaven) "nothing ever happens".

But *Priscilla*, *Muriel* and the other films of that ilk are the ultimate gesture of revenge against this zoned-out, uneventful self-image – a self-image which, in Australian cultural history, had its origin in the sleepy, self-satisfied, consumerist suburban ethos of the 50s. The "suburban surreal" of *Priscilla* screams that things are happening, that the "tyranny of distance" is easily obliterated by three drag queens on a bus, and that people of every imaginable ethnic and sexual mix can look equally silly to one another.

As for the sensitive films about "returning home", or *Metal Skin's* angst-ridden conflagration in the western suburbs, or *Angel Baby's* dreamy vision of Melbourne as a phantom Paris, these films too are trying in their own ways to demonstrate that something is really happening in this desert, that there is a soul (of whatever description) vibrating there. And equally, they all accord with Canadian Peter Harcourt's belief that "colonial culture, fragile though it may be, is the product of all sorts of people thinking about the particularities of the spaces in which they live and about the rhythms of their individual and collective lives."

'Muriel's Wedding' is on general release

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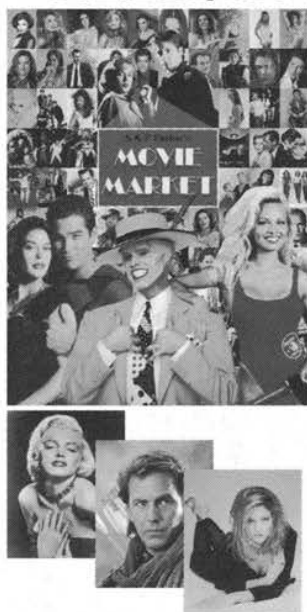
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He knows about crazy

I may come back in another life as an artichoke, but generally I presume this is it: no rehearsals, just the main event. So my available time is valuable, and why bother with the cinema? Well, it can be fun and I like fun. There are also films for which I will happily surrender my current interior projection, because they are significant news from an outside world. A reality, not the Big One, and worth a couple of hours.

Of course, a great many films have occupied bits of my life, wonderfully. For the purposes of this article, I'll talk about *The Silence of the Lambs*. It works. It does the job above and beyond the call of duty. It is also a moral film. I don't mean the morality of the gloatingly grubby little sentences they now tack on TV-guide plot summaries ("contains eight f-words and three nipples"), I mean this is a film about psychopaths which isn't psychopathic. So Anthony Hopkins' Mad Bad Guy gets to underplay, and do nice things worth an Oscar, without tearing the plot out of whack. And there's sympathy in Ted Levine's Mad Bad Guy. (Who is not offensive to trans-sexuals: he is clearly described as something other than trans-sexual.) Even the realistically dead corpses are also shown in earlier, happy photographs.

Taking its lead from Harris' book, everybody here gets to be a Human Being, because Human Beings' lives are precious and it's bad when they're diminished or taken away. In my opinion that's a difficult, unusual and rather good thing for any piece of art to say. Especially when it deals with death and violence.

Violence. Tsk, tsk, tsk. Not allowed.

Not allowed unless you're liquidising someone the plot prevented us from caring about. Or turning a Bad Guy into hamburger. Or humiliating and killing one of those squealy-flappy things they have in films instead of women. In these instances, violence is fine.

Excuse me? Fine?

This means that the edited-for-television version of *Silence* cut its one moment of genuine, unpleasant violence. Because Meaningful Violence is bad. And what did that do to the film? The preceding scene established identification with Lecter, the Bad Guy. The cut took away the moment where we stop identifying. On national television. That's how silly, prurient censorship produces what it claims to be protecting me from.

But back to those squealy-flappy things. Did anyone else feel like cheering when the opening titles began? Grim music, grey sky, deserted woodland – isn't this the standard setting for "discovery of nude/mangled female body"?

But there was no body. Instead, enter a fit, assault-coursing, independent Female Hero. Agent Starling will never hear a noise in the woods at night and go out with stilettos and no torch. Why aren't there more parts where actresses of this calibre can exercise a fraction of their abilities? And get paid as much as the men?

And the men – forgive me, but I've always had a soft spot for that father/daughter thing. Starling has three fathers: one of them's dead, one of them's mad and

Novelist A. L. Kennedy loves the morality and the craft of Jonathan Demme's 'The Silence of the Lambs' and its refusal to diminish human life

Crawford is a git, but I'm still a happy bunny. Starling even gets to outwit Anthony Heald's staggeringly sexist Chilton, who is later eaten by one of her fathers. Freud would have a field day – the nice folks in my cinema just cheered.

But when fathers aren't really fathers and daughters aren't really daughters they can play all those wonderful sex and power games. The real games – the ones that involve subtlety, character development, acting. Two forefingers finally touching, after lovely preparation, are shocking. (Like the bit in *Witness* where she takes off her hat. Phew.)

The current film penchant for soggy porn with fancy lighting leaves me unconscious. If I wanted pornography, I would go out and get some. If I'm watching a film, I want things to happen. What were Stone and Douglas slamming away at each other for? To tell me they were randy? They were nasty? Gee, shucks, I'd never have guessed. Face it – no performer (that I can think of) emotes well with their buttocks. Even Stanislavsky would have been challenged.

If you want electricity, watch the exchanges between Starling and Lecter. Go on. Look at the angles, look at the lighting, look at the photography, listen to the lines, look at the acting: they are all doing good things for each other.

Demme seems to have the knack of getting great people to do what they do best.

(*Caged Heat* was appalling, but it was trying to be good and Tak Fujimoto let us see it all, actually more than we wanted to.) In *Silence* they're working with fine material and they get fine results. What about that gratuitous Americana-equals-Serial-Killer visual theme? Someone with space to work and confidence did that.

So it's bouquets all round. But since I type for a living I'll finish with Ted Tally and the script, its admirable pace and preparation. If you prepare for a moment you don't have to overwrite, you give yourself room, you give everybody room. This script builds a female hero, nourishes some wonderful performers and maintains its humane interior line. It also runs like a Swiss watch on the wrist of a Concorde pilot. Harris' book was a fine place to start but it needed work.

For example, in Harris' book, Lecter shouts, "I don't think Miggs could manage again so soon, even if he is crazy, do you?" According to Tally (given that a script is collaborative), Lecter shouts, "... even though he is crazy." Because "do you?" doesn't scan. Because Lecter is always certain – no ifs, no soft questions. Because Lecter is a Mad Psychiatrist – he knows about crazy. Even we know the inmate he's discussing is several signatures short of the chequebook, and probably talks to the pen.

That's word-for-word attention and character development through dialogue. Nice.



Undiminished: Anthony Hopkins as Hannibal Lecter and Jodie Foster as Clarice Starling

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Suburban savannah

Gareth Stanton

Africa on Film: Beyond Black and White

Kenneth Cameron, Continuum, \$27.95, 240pp, ISBN 0 8264 0658 0

From the earliest days of the medium, Africa, or 'Africa', was a focus of film's attention. And, along with many other regions of the world, it suffered in this respect: every English language film which dealt with it could be said to share the same limited vision of it. In recent years, in those academic circles where the critic Edward Said has influence, there has been much investigation of such matters, of the way in which western writing (irrespective of genre) dealt with the Orient (the focus of Said's work), and similarly – in subsequent studies – the way a particular version of Africa came to dominate the literature concerning it. As Cameron points out, much of this can be reduced to a small number of repeated motifs: 'jungle', 'darkness' and 'savagery' go to make up the Victorian image of the Dark Continent. It should come as no surprise that in the early days of cinema these themes and images were recreated in celluloid. Cameron examines how this took place, producing a partisan book by a man who loves both Africa and film, and the most systematic attempt to date to analyse the image of Africa in British and American commercial cinema.

Its great advantage is that his agenda is not dictated by briefly trendy academic ideas: he prefers to let the films – a broad selection, spanning various productions of *King Solomon's Mines* to *Shaft in Africa* – speak on their own behalf. To this end the book is broken down into chapters examining the appearance and life spans of particular myths and archetypes, such as the 'White Goddess', the 'Imperial Man' and the 'Good African'. This is an important development. All too many of the films he discusses have been dismissed in the past simply as 'racist':

Cameron invites us to take our examination further, beyond this label, to try and trace how filmic representations of Africa have changed and

evolved, enabling us to see how certain myths, as well as the dominant archetypes, have shifted over time. We learn how the fictional types that emerged in the late Victorian period with the novels of H. Rider Haggard, and later A. E. W. Mason and the American Edgar Rice Burroughs, spilled over into early cinema; and how these lost their initial appeal, by the 30s and 40s appearing more akin to comic-book ideas of Africa. New myths then came to dominate: the imperial adventurer hero gave way to the tragic white man going 'native' in the arms of a Black Eve, soon to be lost to 'civilisation'; while the Passive African gave way to the Dangerous African, a new category for the dawning post-war era of independence struggles. This last provided a wider range of parts for black actors and showed that, while racist presuppositions still remained, the days were at last gone when African roles could be played by white actors in blackface.

Despite such transformations, Cameron notes that there always remains a disjuncture between the filmic 'Africa' and the sheer complexity of the Africa which he knows. However, the view that these films are irredeemably tainted by a monolithic racism blinds us to the many other elements in play. Cameron provides one wonderful example, when he analyses the evolution of the Tarzan plots, wherein, he suggests, 'Africa' becomes a kind of suburbia, the ideal American family being made up of Father Tarzan, Mother Jane, perfect child Boy and funny baby Cheetah, with a pet elephant instead of a dog. This exhaustive and stimulating study is a rich reminder of the benefits which accrue if we can move beyond simplistic dismissal.

Just deserts

Geoffrey Macnab

The Making of David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*

Adrian Turner, Dragon's World, £20 (hb), 192pp, ISBN 1 85028 211 0

"This is not a book which will regularly enthuse over certain scenes, the acting, the photography, the sets, the editing," Adrian Turner announces in the foreword to *The Making of David Lean's Lawrence of Arabia*. But

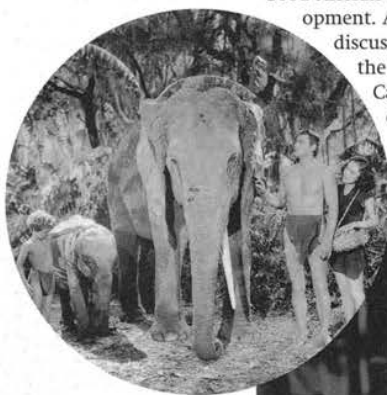
his remarks are belied by a handsome cover (a huge picture of Peter O'Toole enthroned like a sun god in white mufti against a blue sky) and by every subsequent, illustration-filled page. The beautifully reproduced colour stills not only offer a chronological record of Lean's film, sequence by sequence, they also fetishise it, inviting the reader to marvel at the desert sunsets and epic Super Panavision battle scenes that the director and his cinematographer Freddie Young had so magically contrived. The pictures take up so much space that the text is often, quite literally, marginalised.

So this looks like a coffee-table book, in which the words simply bridge the spaces between the glossy images. But it definitely doesn't read like one. Witty, meticulously researched, it manages to capture the sheer hubristic folly behind *Lawrence of Arabia*. After all, there is something quixotic and very British about a film that takes nearly two years to shoot, involves small armies of extras, thousands of camels and great feats of logistical genius, all to tell the story of a man the director himself described as "an English nut".

Turner believes there are close parallels between Lawrence and Lean. Both were products of dreary, English middle-class suburbia. Both reinvented themselves as exotic outsiders. And both embellished history. Lawrence with his Homeric *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and Lean with his outraged insistence that producer Sam Spiegel chopped large chunks from his film behind his back. This, Turner insists, simply isn't true. Lean knew all about and even supervised the cuts made immediately after the 1962 release, and helped shorten the film still further for television in 1971. He allowed archivist Robert Harris to restore Lawrence to "more or less" its original 222-minute length, and orchestrated the 1989 'director's cut'. The conventional saga, of the Orson Welles-like genius having his work vitiated by the philistines in the front office, is given a novel twist: by touting the restored film as Lean's own, definitive version, Columbia was able to market it as if it were a brand new picture. Marketing and archival imperatives bizarrely overlapped.

Len Deighton has argued in *Sight and Sound* (January, 1995) that *Lawrence of Arabia* was an exercise in photography and logistics rather than film-making, and therefore more Spiegel's film than Lean's. Turner, however, points out that Spiegel rarely appeared on set. Lean was definitely the one calling the shots. In response to the producer's complaints about how long the film was taking, Lean is reputed to have raged, "Here I am in this fucking desert in this fucking sandstorm making this fucking film whilst you are fucking your dolly birds on the fucking Riviera." These are hardly the words of a hired hand.

In a way, the belated disputes over Lean's and Spiegel's relative contributions to the movie make a highly appropriate coda to a project that was always dogged by controversy. Turner writes with great relish about all the internecine feuds that took place before the cameras even started rolling. Everybody from Alexander Korda to Anatole De Grunwald fought over the rights. The original scriptwriter, Michael Wilson, was bumped from the project and denied the credit his work deserved. His replacement, the late Robert Bolt, got himself arrested at



Tribes and tribulation: Johnny Weissmuller, Maureen O'Sullivan and family in 'Tarzan Finds a Son!'; above: Paul Robeson and Elisabeth Welch worry in 'The Song of Freedom', right





English dramas: Omar Sharif in 'Lawrence of Arabia', above; Cecil Hepworth's 1923 version of 'Comin thro' the Rye', below right

a sit-down rally in Trafalgar Square before he'd finished a vital draft. Albert Finney turned down the lead role after a four-day, £100,000 screen test for the very British reason that he didn't want to become a star.

Just as Charles Foster Kane managed to be both communist and fascist, T. E. Lawrence and the movie he spawned provoked hugely differing responses. Some see *Lawrence of Arabia* as a critique of colonialism. Others regard it as Kipling-style derring-do. Lawrence's brother railed in *The Times* against its distortions. The film itself doesn't seem entirely sure about its leading character: "But did he deserve a place in here?" a vicar asks Brighton (Anthony Quayle) as the two stand in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral following Lawrence's memorial service. It's a question that could equally well apply to Lean. In most accounts of British cinema, he's still liable to be placed a rung or two beneath Powell and Hitchcock; dismissed as a technically proficient but passionless filmmaker before *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, and a purveyor of empty wide-screen spectacles thereafter. Turner refuses to accept this. If nothing else, his study of the making of *Lawrence of Arabia* underlines the fact that Lean made his films from the heart: he was every bit as vain, obsessive and driven as Lawrence himself.

Heritage centred

Colin McArthur

Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain

Andrew Higson, Oxford Clarendon Press, £40 (hb), 322pp, ISBN 0 19 812369 8

As I write this review, my Indo-Caribbean wife sets off for work in a community project currently menaced by violent Neo-Fascists. She faces daily the sharp end of a problem I am addressing here in relative safety and comfort – the struggle over the meaning of the word "British".

However seamless and continuous British history may appear, this struggle has always been present, sometimes rumbling underground, sometimes erupting into full view. Its current stark visibility has several causes, of uneven weight: among them, the relative decline of Britain's status as a Great Power; the shift towards economic globalisation and political regionalisation; and the ending of the Cold War with attendant re-emergence of (sometimes lethal) nationalisms. It is visible in the arguments over what should be included under English, History and Religious Studies in the National Curriculum; in Norman Tebbit's assertion that national allegiance is discernible in the team one

roots for at Test Matches; and, most recently, in the *Panorama* debacle, widely read by Scots as one more metropolitan insult. This disintegration of any unified sense of British identity has produced a collective need to re-imagine a national identity. These "national imaginings", in the world of cinema, are what Andrew Higson explores here.

Higson gives us three extended case studies: the first of *Comin' thro' the Rye* in the period immediately after World War One (there were versions in 1916 and 1923); the second of *Evergreen* and *Sing as We Go!* in the 30s; and the third of *Millions Like Us* and *This Happy Breed* in the 40s. The great merit of the book is to locate discussion of these films in one (or sometimes both) of two discourses: either the economic and organisational discourse of a 'British film industry' or the intellectual and ideological discourse of a 'national cinema'. This it does with great sophistication, at various points mobilising hard, empirical history as well as more theoretical approaches.

Boldly, *Comin' Thro' the Rye* is retrieved from a tradition within which it has been viewed as a quaint, retarded step on the way to a more 'cinematic' practice, and considered, instead, within the problematic of 'heritage film'. This Higson shows is no invention of the 80s, but rather dates back to the beginnings of British cinema, when it performed the same functions as it does today: differentiating itself from the Hollywood product and claiming an authentic Britishness (or more accurately, Englishness). This differentiation and these claims were also a feature, of course, of another tradition: documentary realism, which Higson explores in relation to *Millions Like Us* and *This Happy Breed*. The account of the incorporation of the formal features of 30s and wartime documentary into British narrative cinema makes this third section particularly rich. The middle case study deals with two different responses to Hollywood hegemony in the 1930s: *Evergreen*, the Jessie Matthews picture, is compared with *Sing as We Go!*, an altogether more unexportable film, being predicated on Gracie Fields' distinctly British music-hall persona.

These case studies all reveal somewhat different imaginings of the nation. *Comin' thro' the Rye*, in common with later examples of

the heritage film, produces a powerfully conservative version of British identity. Both *This Happy Breed* and *Millions Like Us*, as befits films influenced by documentary realism, are potentially progressive, in that they both deal with the 'common people'. Little time is spent on this aspect of *Evergreen*, beyond pointing out that as a kind of backstage musical its putatively universal never-never land is entirely in keeping with the film's economic project: to copy as closely as possible the successful Warner Brothers musicals of the time. *Sing as We Go!*, on the other hand, had a quite specific national imagining, presenting "... a powerful sense of the nation as a secure, all embracing but at the same time close-knit community, a functioning consensus."

In his conclusion, Higson makes a number of important points, not least that the modern version of the documentary realist form, far from celebrating the consensual nation of the older films, precisely reveals its fissures. Films such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* display a society riven by questions of class, race, gender and sexual orientation. Higson raises the possibility that the inferred nature of a text is less important than what diverse audiences make of it. Given this, it's somewhat curious when he asserts that "... in the present climate I would rather call for a socialist cinema, or a green cinema, or a feminist cinema than for the renewal of British cinema."

Waving the Flag is written from the English heartlands. The desirability of a national (though not necessarily a British) cinema looks very much more urgent to those, like John Hill, who write from the Celtic periphery. But even from a British perspective, I am reluctant to go all the way with Higson in abandoning the idea of a national cinema. I am fond of the proto-Utopianism of *Millions Like Us*, despite its ambivalences and silences, and in particular of the great moment it pointed forward to – the 1945 Labour Government. Clearly, any British national cinema of the 90s that one would want to have anything to do with needs to reflect the massive hybridity of our time. But, as the opening sentence of this review indicates, the cost of abandoning an imagined Britain with a place for all its diverse citizens (and a cinema that reflects this) is not just an academic issue.



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The Brady Bunch Movie

USA 1995

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Throne; "We
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Tyrell, Michael Landau,
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"Girl" by Charles Fox,
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Foley Editors
Jeffrey R. Payne
Scott G. G. Haller
Sound Mixer
Russell Williams II
ADR Mixer
Bob Baron
Foley Mixer
Randy Singer
Re-recording Mixers
Robert J. Litt
Elliot Tyson
Rick Hart
Sound Effects Editors
Kim Secrist
Jeffrey L. Sandler
Foley Artists
Ken Dufva
David Lee Fein
Stunt Co-ordinator
Pat Romano

Cast

Shelley Long
Carol Brady
Gary Cole
Mike Brady
Christopher Daniel Barnes
Greg Brady
Christine Taylor
Marcia Brady
Paul Sotera
Peter Brady
Jennifer Elise Cox
Jan Brady
Jesse Lee
Bobby Brady
Olivia Hack
Cindy Brady
Henrietta Mantel
Alice
David Graf
Sam
Jack Noseworthy
Eric
Megan Ward
Donna
Jean Smart
Mrs Dittmeyer
Michael McKeon
Mr Dittmeyer
Moriah Snyder
Missy
Alanna Ubach
Noreen
Shane Conrad
Doug
Marissa Ribisi
Holly

R. D. Robb
Charlie
Steven Gilborn
Mr Phillips
Alexander Pourtash
Mr Amir
Keone Young
Mr Watanabe
James Avery
Mr Yeager
Yolanda Snowball
Mrs Yeager
Robert Rothwell
Mr Simmons
Elisa Pensler Gabrielli
Miss Lynley
David Proval
Electrician
Arnold Turner
Officer Axelrod
Barion Basco
Eddie
Gaura Vani Buchwald
Leon
Shannah Laumeister
Molly
David Leisure
Jason
Archie Hahn
Mr Swanson
Barry Williams
Music Producer
Beverly Archer
Mrs Whitfield
Tammy Townsend
Danielle
Patrick Thomas O'Brien
Auctioneer
RuPaul
Mrs Cummings
Ann B. Davis
Trucker
Eric Nies
Hip MC
Davy Jones
Micky Dolenz
Peter Tork
Themselves
Tully Jensen
Model
Jennifer Blanc
Valley Girl
Julie Payne
Mrs Simmons
Tamara Mello
Stacy
Christopher Knight
Coach
Selma Archerd
Neighbour
James Randall White
Limo Driver
Lisa Sutton
Hooker
Ban Lipe
John R. Fors
Angry Neighbours
Kim Hasse
Student

7,977 feet
89 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Deluxe



Remake, re-model: Taylor, Elise Cox

best friend Noreen. Hearing devilish voices, insecure about her new glasses and obsessively jealous of Marcia, Jan visits the jaded school counsellor who tells her to establish her own identity.

Meanwhile, Mike's gas station-style designs aren't selling and he's given three chances to land a client. Dittmeyer informs Mike that he must come up with the money for the taxes in a few days or the house will be auctioned off. Cindy overhears, and the kids have a meeting in which Jan suggests they enter the school talent contest, which offers a \$20,000 cash prize. The kids balk, but a few days later after they've failed to make any money, Marcia suggests the talent show option and the kids agree.

An outraged Jan runs away and is picked up by a woman trucker who uses the CB radio to inform the worried family that Jan is safe and sound. The next day the kids enter the contest as a sequinned singing group, win, and rush back home just in time to pay the taxes and convince the neighbours not to sell. They go inside where Grandma Brady is waiting. She ignores Jan but hugs Marcia, thereby sending Jan into a psychotic rage. Grandma slaps Jan, she feels better, and then Cindy starts hearing voices.

When it was announced that Hollywood was going to bring television's *The Brady Bunch* to the big screen there were loud rumblings that it would be a colossal commercial bomb to match the *The Coneheads* or *The Beverly Hillbillies*, especially as *The Brady Bunch*'s audience is a very specific one. Since it originally aired in North America between 1969 and 1971 – and then enjoyed constant re-runs throughout the 70s and early 80s – this cheesy sitcom never really appealed to the then-teenage Baby Boom generation, and had petered out before the kitsch-savvy 'Generation X' could claim it as their own. It's the in-between generation, those who watched the show as impatient, yearning pre-teens, who embraced a show which was considered out of date even when originally broadcast.

Those with an encyclopaedic knowledge of the show will really appreciate *The Brady Bunch Movie* because the

Los Angeles, 1995. The city is a loud, violent mess, but for the Bradys – architect Dad Mike, home-maker mom Carol, and their six kids, Greg, Marcia, Peter, Jan, Bobby and Cindy – it's still 1975. Little Cindy visits next door neighbour and amoral real estate agent Mr Dittmeyer to retrieve lost mail. As the Bradys are the only family on the street who won't sell their home to make way for a mini-mall, Dittmeyer holds onto a \$20,000 property tax bill in the hopes they will be forced out. The kids, dressed in double-knit vests and polyester, go off to school. Greg decides to become a rock star to woo a girl. Marcia swoons when superjock Doug asks her to the school dance, but is oblivious to the love signals being sent her way by her lesbian

screenwriting team has sewn together bits and pieces from over a dozen episodes. True fans will notice touches such as the kitchen blackboard with the words "porkchops and applesauce" written on it, which refers to an episode in which Peter repeats that saying in an annoying Humphrey Bogart voice. Is that funny? No, not really, but it makes fans feel at home, as if they are looking at a favourite family album. Non-fans will have more trouble with the film. Relying on horrific 70s fashions and campy wholesome behaviour to produce more general laughter is risky, so the film-makers finds a neat escape route in having the alien-like family rub against modern-day society.

Allowing the boy-crazy Marcia a lesbian best friend is one of the screenplay's more effective twists. The scene in which Noreen, wide-eyed and frozen with desire, shares Marcia's bed during a sleep-over is hilarious. Turning Jan into a schizophrenic is also an inspired move, while the brief glimpse of the old maid housekeeper, Alice, in a dominatrix outfit is downright subversive. *The Brady Bunch Movie* is at its best when giving its fish-out-of-water premise a mean edge. Yet there isn't enough nastiness in this movie. The film-makers pull back when they should be charging ahead, seemingly afraid of alienating their audience.

Since the less-compelling bulk of *The Brady Bunch Movie* is made up of corny sitcom jokes, producers Sherwood Schwartz and his son Lloyd must share part of the blame, as they were also at the controls of the original television show. Barry Williams (the original Greg) in his book *Growing Up Brady* quotes a remark by Robert Reed (the original Mike): "Sherwood Schwartz was absolutely the worst writer working in television. But that all changed when suddenly there showed up one writer who was even worse. It was Lloyd." So the late Reed underscores a constant problem with television translated into cinema: poor writing. *The Flintstones*, *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *The Addams Family* movies have all faltered because they can't get around the basic narrative problem of how to create a two hour story for characters who previously existed in a 22 minute universe.

What works best in *The Brady Bunch Movie* are the performances from the younger cast members. Particularly outstanding is Christine Taylor as Marcia, who fine-tunes vacuous, hair-brushing vanity into an art form. But it's Jennifer Elise Cox who steals the film as Jan. Her moments of Linda Blair-meets-Sybil psychosis show the makings of a fine comedic actress. Even the often-maligned Shelley Long turns in a top notch, albeit small, performance as a carbon copy of the blandly daffy Henderson. There are also fun cameos from RuPaul as the school guidance counselor, Barry Williams as a record executive, Florence Henderson (the original Carol Brady) as Grandma Brady, and the original Alice (Ann B. Davis) as the helpful trucker.

Ingrid Randoja

Bye Bye Love

USA 1995

Director: Sam Weisman

Certificate

PG

Distributor

20th Century Fox

Production Company

20th Century Fox

present

An Ubu production

Producers

Gary David Goldberg

Brad Hall

Sam Weisman

Co-producer

Michael MacDonald

Associate Producer

Jimmy Simons

Production Co-ordinator

Barbara Freedman

Unit Production Manager

Michael MacDonald

Location Manager

Brian Haynes

Post-production Co-ordinator

Carol Kelson

Assistant Directors

Jimmy Simons

Steven Hirsch

Lisanne Sartor

Casting

Associate:

Janet Gilmore

Screenplay

Gary David Goldberg

Brad Hall

Script Supervisor

Susan Lowitz

Director of Photography

Kenneth Zunder

Camera Operators

Walt Fraser

Tom Connole

Editor

Roger Bondelli

Production Designer

Linda DeScenna

Art Director

Greg Palalia

Set Design

Antoinette J. Gordon

Set Decorator

Ric McElvin

Set Dressers

Donn Piller

Mark Boucher

Sam Anderson

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Burt Dalton

Costume Design

Linda Bass

Wardrobe Supervisor

Eileen Mae Sieff

Make-up

Steve Abrams

Ken Wensevic

Hairstylists

Colleen Callaghan

Katherine Gordon

Title Design

Robert Dawson

Titles/Opticals

Buena Vista Imaging

Music

J.A.C. Redford

Music Performed by

Guitars:

George Doering

John Jorgenson

Percussion:

Steve Forman

Keyboards:

Randy Kerber

Bass:

John Patitucci

Vocalists:

Arnold McCuller

Megan Mullally

Music Conductor /

Orchestrations

J.A.C. Redford

Music Supervisors

Eyven Klean

Paul Broucek

Supervising Music Editor

Michael T. Ryan

Songs/Music Extracts

"Falling in Love

Again" by Friedrich

Hollaender, Samuel

Lerner, performed

by Linda Ronstadt;

"Bye Bye Love" by Felice

Bryant, Boudleaux

Bryant, performed

by (1) The Everly

Brothers (2) The

Proclaimers; "So Sad

(To Watch Good Love

Go Bad)" by Don Everly,

performed by The

Everly Brothers;

"Don't Worry Baby"

by Brian Wilson, Roger

Christian, performed

by The Everly Brothers,

The Beach Boys; "Stones

in the Road" by and

performed by Mary

Chapin Carpenter; "D-I-

V-O-R-G-E" by Bobby

Braddock, Carly

Putnam, performed

by Megan Mullally;

"Rawhide" by

Dimitri Tiomkin,

Ned Washington,

performed by Frankie

Laine; "This Little

Girl of Mine" by Ray

Charles, performed

by Dave Edmunds;

"Our House" by

Graham Nash,

performed by Crosby,

Stills, Nash & Young;

"Mr. Moon" by Dick

Hyman; "Let it Be"

by Mann Curtis, Pierre

Delano, Gilbert

Becaud, performed

by Jackson Browne,

Timothy B. Schmit;

"Saying Goodbye"

by Kim Shattuck,

performed by The

Muffs; "You Can't

Hurry Love" by Edward

Holland, Brian Holland,

Lamont Dozier,

performed by Phil

Collins; "That's Amore"

by Jack Brooks, Harry

Warren, performed

by Dean Martin; "In

Me I Trust" by Da

Skunk, Loopiss, A-Man,

performed by Mindrot;

"Jimmy Olsen's Blues"

by and performed by

Spin Doctors; "Peter

Gunn" by Henry

Mancini; "I Will"

by John Lennon, Paul

McCartney, performed

by Ben Taylor

Supervising Sound Editor

Robert L. Sephton

Dialogue Editor

Charles E. Smith

Supervising ADR Editor

C.T. Welch

ADR Editors

Darrell Hanzalik

Fred Judkins

Foley Editor

Scott Weber

Sound Mixers

David Kelson

Music:

John Vigran

ADR Mixer

Doc Kane

Foley Mixer

David Gertz

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Rick Ash

Andy D'Addario

Jim Bolt

Sound Effects Editors

Ryan Robinson

Bryan O. Watkins

Foley Artists

Jim Moriana

Jeff Wilhoit

ADR Group Co-ordinator

Leigh French

Custom Looping

Soccer Technical Advisers

Drew Leonard

Sigi Schmid

Talk Show Consultant

Bob K

Stunt Co-ordinator

James M. Halty

Film Extract

The Yearling (1946)

Cast

Matthew Modine

Dave

Randy Quaid

Vic

Paul Reiser

Donny

Janeane Garofalo

Lucille

Amy Brenneman

Susan

Eliza Dushku

Emma

Ed Flanders

Walter

Maria Piltito

Kim

Lindsay Crouse

Grace

Ross Malinger

Ben

Johnny Whitworth

Max

Wendell Pierce

Hector

Cameron Boyd

Jed

Mae Whitman

Michele

Jayne Brook

Clayne

Dana Wheeler-Nicholson

Heidi

Amber Benson

Meg

Rob Reiner

Dr Townsend

Pamela Dillman

Sheila

Brad Hall

Phil

Danny Masterson

Mikey

James Arone

Waiter in Italian

Restaurant

Karl M. Cavino Brown

Kirstie R. Cavino Brown

Lindsay

Marguerite Weisman

Sarah

Max Ryan Ornstein

Ring Bearer at Wedding

Dean Williams

Wedding Photographer

Caroline Lagerfelt

Stephanie Shroyer

Mothers at McDonalds

Christopher Curry

Michael Bofshever

Dads at McDonalds

Daniel Weisman

Boy at McDonalds

Christina Massari

Girl at McDonalds

Brian Frank

Screener

Shang Forbes

Engineer

T.K. Meehan

T-Ball Coach

Mina Kolb

Dorothy

◀ All the upbeat imagery begs the question: where's the beef? If, as Townsend announces with typical mock flippancy, "divorced Americans are the most unhappy people in the world with the possible exception of married Scandinavians," why does *Bye Bye, Love* make them all look so cheerful? Director Sam Weisman claims that he sees his characters as the middle-aged descendants of the heroes of *American Graffiti*, but there is none of the detail or local colour that distinguished George Lucas's film: Vic, Dave and Donny live in an anodyne patch of suburbia where the outer world never seems to intrude. The film broaches all sorts of issues, but lacks the gumption to follow up on any of them.

When one of the ex-wives complains that she could never get her husband to love her as much as he did his two friends, it seems as if the film-makers are attempting at least a mild critique of buddydom, but this is not the case. Dave may be a womaniser, Donny may be consumed with regret over the break-up of his marriage, but all the characters are presented as such genial, well-adjusted sorts that they beggars belief that they have marital problems at all. Divorce here isn't presented as any kind of social malaise, but is used as a comic motor: it's a device to confront the characters with the kind of domestic problems faced by Tom Sellack and co. in *Three Men And A Baby*. In other words, the men may have to do a little housework now and again.

Only Randy Quaid, in scowling form as Donny, does anything to puncture the prevailing mood. In a scene which seems all too clearly pilfered from Altman's *Short Cuts*, he sets about his ex-wife's verandah with a chainsaw. As he rips a family photograph out of its frame, simply because he isn't in it, he hints at much darker emotions than the film is prepared to confront. It's typical of the way the movie pulls its punches that when he finally gets round to assaulting Dr Townsend live on air, he stops trying to throttle him as soon as he is offered a chance to broadcast his own thoughts. Dave's problems with his new girlfriend and the rift between Donny and his daughter are smoothed over in an equally glib fashion as the film-makers graft on a conventionally happy ending.

In its own genial, enervating way, *Bye Bye, Love* makes for pleasant enough comedy. The film-makers have a background in television, with credits which range from *Moonlighting* and *LA Law* to *Lou Grant* and *Family Ties*. They very capably fashion a movie which nods politely in the direction of social problems without actually addressing them. There is plenty of crisp, witty dialogue. The acting, too, is perfectly efficient. After *Birdy* and *Equinox*, it's a surprise to see Matthew Modine take on such an undemanding role, but he, like his co-stars Quaid and Paul Reiser, offers a neat, personable performance. But the bland, unchallenging view of family life offered by the movie is never credible for an instant.

Geoffrey Macnab

Clockwork Mice

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Vadim Jean

Certificate

15

Distributor

Feature Film Co

Production Company

Metrodome productions

Executive Producers

Alan Martin

Gary Smith

Co-executive Producers

Bruce Green

Alan Sharr

Producer

Paul Brooks

Line Producers

Simon Hardy

Simon Scotland

Associate Producers

Mathew Lane

Mick Southworth

David Holloway

Co-associate Producer

Hormoz Verahramian

Production Co-ordinator

Kate Dain

Location Manager

Jane Soans

Assistant Directors

Alexandra Bridcut

Kate Dain

Tony Plato

Casting

Carl Proctor

Screenplay

Rod Woodruff

Script Supervisor

Marinella Setti

Director of Photography

Gordon Hickie

Camera Operator

Paul Godfrey

Visual Effects

Any Effects

Supervisor:

Tom Harris

Design:

Ralph McNeil

Editor

Liz Webber

Production Designer

David Munns

Art Director

Trish Stephenson

Set Dressers

Ida Cook

Daisy Bodly

Scenic Artist

Al Shirley

Storyboard Artist

Mathew Meadows

Costume Design

John Krausa

Wardrobe Supervisor

David Ayres

Make-up

Sharon Robbins

Collette King

Music

John Murphy

David Hughes

Songs

"I don't know why",

performed by Shawn

Colvin; "Step it up &

Step it up" by R. Birch

and N. Hallam, "

performed by the

Stereo MC's

Dialogue Editor

Fifi Featherbrough

Foley Editor

Mike Redfern

Sound Recordist

Simmy Clare

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Clive Pendry

Mick Boggis

Ted Swancott

Stunt Co-ordinator

Rod Woodruff

Cast

Ian Hart

Steve

Ruaidhri Conroy

Conrad James

Catherine Russell

Polly

Art Malik

Laney

Claire Skinner

Fairy

Nigel Planer

Parkey

John Alderton

Swaney

James Bolam

Wackey

Lilly Edwards

Mrs Charlton

Robin Soans

Millwright

Melissa Simmonds

Jack McKenzie

CID officers

Carl Proctor

Billy Bavey

Country Policemen

Hormoz Verahramian

Businessmen

Glen Murphy

Mr Charlton

Toyosi Ajikawa

Tanya

Lee Barrett

Clive Williams

Leon Black

Burrows

Frankie Bruno

Neil (Wellsy)

Bobby Coombes

Jeremy Marks

Anthony Cumber

Didgery

Ellam Lloyd Hull

David Charlton

Barren Kennedy

Smithy

Jodie Peters

Samantha

Joanna Potts

Sharon

Marcus Rose

Perryman

Inderpall Sagoo

Sinbad

Luke Strain

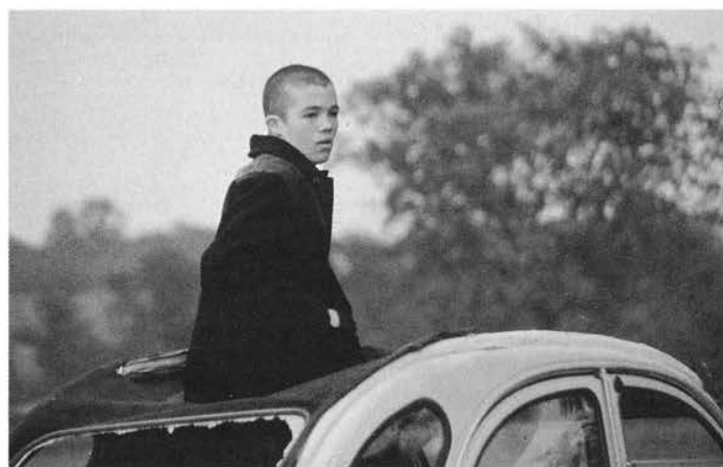
Austin

8,895 feet

99 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour



A runner's chariot: Ruaidhri Conroy

room, smashes the window and runs off. But gradually Steve persuades the other pupils in his class to pay attention to the poetry he reads them.

A keen cross-country runner, Steve notices that Conrad is also very fast, and agrees to compete with him in a race round the school buildings. Steve wins in the last stride, and Conrad, impressed, decides he wants Steve to train him. Steve sets up a cross-country club and, after initial reluctance, the rest of the pupils and staff join in. But he finds it hard to balance his devotion to his work with his increasing involvement with Polly, who tells him she is going to resign. Meanwhile, upset by the news of his father's death, Conrad runs away and goes joyriding.

Trying to guess where he's gone, Steve finds a story Conrad wrote called '42 Stops', and realises the title refers to the London-to-Brighton train route. Steve and Laney catch up with Conrad just as he is jumping onto the roof of a steam train to 'train surf'. They give chase, but at the next station Conrad tries to escape by polevaulting across the tracks as the train sets off; he is killed. Back at Parkwood, Steve resigns, but before he goes Neil persuades him to go for one last run. The other pupils run with him to the houseboat where Polly lives, and cheer as Steve and Polly embrace.

Clockwork Mice is Vadim Jean's third feature, making him the most prolific of the latest generation of independent British film-makers to have emerged in the 90s. But whereas his first two films both fell outside the Channel Four-style mainstream – *Leon The Pig Farmer* (which Jean co-directed with Gary Sinyor) for its irreverent Jewish humour and *Beyond Bedlam* for its drug-crazed horror – this is a story which would be better suited to the small screen, an impression reinforced by the casting in supporting roles of such sitcom stalwarts as James Bolam, John Alderton and Nigel Planer.

Clockwork Mice has its cinematic antecedents, from the 60s social realism of *Kes* or *The Loneliness Of The Long Distance Runner* (which featured a young James Bolam) to the more calculatedly inspiring visions of *Chariots Of Fire* and *Dead Poets Society*. But while running works fine as an all-purpose metaphor

for the effort to improve oneself, it is hard to make exciting on screen: *Chariots*-style slow motion, which Jean uses in the big race between Steve and Conrad, seems to contradict the point that speed is what it's all about. *Clockwork Mice*'s picturesque longshots of figures striding out across open fields in the sunlight do capture the sense of the poetry of John Clare with which Steve tries to inspire his pupils ("We run because we like it through the broad, bright land"). But Jean relies on them too heavily, at one point unleashing a whole musical interlude as the kids run endlessly across field after field to the sound of the Stereo MC's. He also has an annoying tendency to intercut two scenes which happen to be going on at the same time (for example a squash game between Steve and Polly is intercut with Conrad's joyriding), which suggests a lack of confidence about how to shoot and edit a single action sequence fluidly.

As Steve searches Conrad's locker after he has gone missing, he finds a copy of a book called *Running For Life* by Rod Woodruff – who also wrote *Clockwork Mice*. But, disappointingly, his screenplay lacks any detail about training or technique, or exactly how the discipline of running might help foster a sense of self-worth. Although the classroom scenes have the ring of truth, especially thanks to the natural acting of the young cast, the plot seems full of inconsistencies. (For instance, having worked out that Conrad's obsession with '42 Stops' refers to the London-to-Brighton train line, Steve and Laney then immediately track him down to a different line on which steam trains operate.) The love interest between Steve and Polly also seems perfunctory, which means the feelgood finale has a hollow ring.

On the plus side, *Clockwork Mice* features a very intense performance from Ruaidhri Conroy as Conrad. Still in his teens, Conroy has a brooding screen presence and a soulful pair of eyes, already used to good effect in Mike Newell's *Into The West*. Ian Hart, by contrast, seems muted here after his electrifying turns as John Lennon in *The Hours And Times* and *Backbeat*; perhaps the earnest, plodding Steve is more of a Paul McCartney role.

John Wrathall

Don Juan DeMarco

USA 1995

Director: Jeremy Leven

Certificate

15
Distributor
Entertainment
Production Company
New Line productions
For American Zoetrope
Executive Producers
Ruth Vitale
Michael de Luca
Co-executive Producers
Robert Newmyer
Brian Reilly
Jeffrey Silver
Producers
Francis Ford Coppola
Fred Fuchs
Patrick Palmer
Executive in Charge of Production
Carla Fry
Post-production:
Joe Fineman
Production Supervisor
Vincent Agostino
Production Co-ordinator
Kelly Barr
Unit Production Manager
Patrick Palmer
Location Managers
Robert Graf
Paul Boydston
Hawaii:
Stuart R. Spangler
Post-production Supervisor
Sara Romilly
Assistant Directors
Jerry L. Ballew
Eric Jewett
Scott Metcalfe
Robert Zozicki
Casting
Lynn Kressel
Associate:
Scott Genkinger
Screenplay
Jeremy Leven
The character of
Don Juan is based
in part on Don Juan
by Lord Byron
Script Supervisor
Tricia Ronten
Director of Photography
Ralf Bode
Camera Operator
Michael Stone
Graphics
Cheryl Gillis
Gina Zangla
Editor
Tony Gibbs
Production Designer
Sharon Seymour
Art Director
Jeff Knipp
Set Design
Lori Rowbotham
Theodore Sharps
Set Decorator
Maggie Martin
Set Dresser
McPherson O. Downs
Storyboard Artist
Supervisor:
Rick Newsome
Andrea Dietrich
Special Effects Supervisor
James Fredburg
Costume Design
Kirsten Everberg
Costume Supervisor
Fred Lloyd
Make-up
Ron Berkeley
Phillip Rhodes
Patty York
Hairstylist
Lucia Mace
Music
Michael Kamen

Music Performed by

The London
Metropolitan Orchestra
Guitars:
Julian Bream
Juan Martin
John Themis
Chucho Merchan
Violin Soloist:
Christopher Warren-
Green
Cello Soloist:
Caroline Dale
Percussion:
Luis Jardim
Music Conductor
Michael Kamen
Music Executive
Toby Emmerich
Orchestrations
Michael Kamen
Robert Elhai
Music Producer
Michael Kamen
Music Supervisor
Dawn Soler
Music Editors
Christopher Brooks
Zigmund Gron
Songs/Music Extracts
"A tu Vera" by Francisco
Reyes, Nicholas Reyes,
Manitas de Plata,
performed by
The Gipsy Kings;
"El toro relajo" by
Felipe Bermejo,
"No me Quieras Tanto"
by Rafael Hernandez,
performed by Selena,
Sol de Mexico;
"God's Child (Baile
Commingo)" by David
Byrne, performed by
David Byrne, Selina
Supervising Sound Editor
Dane A. Davis
Dialogue Editors
Kimberly Lowe Voigt
John Kwiatkowski
ADR Supervisor
G.W. Brown
Foley Supervisor
Kini Kay
Production Sound Mixer
Richard Lightstone
Music Mixer/Recordist
Stephen McLaughlin
ADR Mixers
Dean Drabin
Brian Ruberg
Foley Mixer
David Jobe
ADR Recordists
Ann Hadsell
Joan Chamberlain
Foley Recordist
Don Givens
Dolby stereo consultant
Sound Re-recording Mixers
Paul Massey
Christopher David
Tom Perry
Sound Transfers
Charles W. Ritter
Sound Effects Editor
Todd Toon
Foley Artists
Sean Rowe
Laura Macias
ADR Group Co-ordinator
Burton Sharp
Technical Supervisor
Lee Tucker
Research Associate
Marianne Shatarnikova
Psychiatric Consultants
Pramila Nathan
Roberta Danza
Stunt Co-ordinator
Victor Paul
Swordmaker
Tony Swatton

Cast

Marion Brando
Jack Mickler
Johnny Depp
Don Juan DeMarco
Faye Dunaway
Marilyn Mickler
Geraldine Pailhas
Dona Ana
Bob Dishy
Dr Paul Showalter
Rachel Ticotin
Doña Inez
Talisa Soto
Doña Julia
Marita Geraghty
Woman in Restaurant
Richard Sarafian
Detective Sy Tobias
Tresa Hughes
Grandmother DeMarco
Stephen Singer
Dr Bill Dunsmore
Franc Luz
Don Antonio
Carmen Argenziano
Don Alfonso
Jo Champa
Sultana Gulbeyaz
Esther Scott
Nurse Alvira
Nada Despotovich
Nurse Gloria
Gilbert Lewis
Judge Ryland
"Tiny" Lister Jnr
Rocco Compton
Tom Mardrosian
Baba, the Eunuch
Al Corley
Woman's Date
Nick La Tour
Nicholas, the Doorman
Bill Capizzi
Sultan
Patricia Mauceri
Doña Querida

Cliff Weissman
Delivery Man
Michael Malota
Young Don Juan
Renee Sicignano
Flower Girl
Trevor Long
Waiter
Sanjay
Auctioneer
Diane Lee
Night Duty Nurse
Joni Kramer
Shirlee Reed
Nurses
Ken Gutstein
Doctor
Adriana Jardini
Social Worker
Robert Polanco Rodriguez
Priest
Roberta Danza
Bridget Mariano
Christine Wolfe
Nuns
José Hernandez
Bandleader
Selena Perez
Singer
Rosendo Casillas
Esperanza Donlucas
Ramirez Filberto
Santiago Garcia
Ernesto V. Molina
Fernando C. Moreno
Mariachi Band

8,755 feet
97 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
CPI
Prints by
Film House

experience. In despair at losing her, Juan had intended suicide.

Despite his scepticism, Mickler finds himself increasingly drawn into Juan's fantasy and refuses to prescribe medication for him. He also begins to take a more romantic attitude to his own becalmed marriage, to the delighted surprise of his wife Marilyn. The hospital has meanwhile located Juan's grandmother, who tells Mickler that the boy was born in Queens (NY), and raised in Phoenix, Arizona, where his father, Tony DeMarco, died in a car crash. Anna is really a centrefold model, Chelsea Stoker, with whom Juan is now obsessed though he has never met her. Mickler is further confused by the arrival of Doña Inez, wearing a nun's habit, who confirms her son's original story.

With the ten-day committal nearly up and Mickler's retirement imminent, Showalter plans to have Juan committed long-term by a judge, given medication and entrusted to Dr Dunsmore. But at the hearing Juan shows up out of costume and gives a story similar to his grandmother's version of events. The judge discharges him, ignoring Showalter's protests. Mickler, Marilyn and Juan fly together to the island of Eros, where they find Anna waiting for her lover.

The end credits of *Don Juan DeMarco* unexpectedly carry an acknowledgement to Lord Byron – unexpected not so much because copyright lapsed long ago on the mad bad lord's literary estate, but because the preceding story seems but scantily influenced by his sardonic, satiric epic poem. (Nor, despite Mozart on the soundtrack, is there any whiff of sulphur; this Don Giovanni's conquests are wholly beneficent.) The film's true antecedents lie in classic Hollywood-Hispanic swashbucklers like *The Mark of Zorro*, all capes and swordplay and florid dialogue, to whose conventions the fantasy sequences of *Don Juan DeMarco* pay explicit homage.

In doing so, it hits the problem that confronts all latter-day attempts to revisit the swashbuckler: how do you spoof something that was spoofing itself in the first place? Director Jeremy Leven's film never seems certain how

deeply its tongue should be kept in its cheek – not so much because its tone varies, but because it doesn't. Whether operating in fantasy or reality mode the dialogue remains relentlessly over-the-top. This works well enough in the harem episode, played openly for laughs ("You have brought my manhood alive and made it sing," Juan tells the amorous Sultana. "It sings?" she responds incredulously), or when the two worlds collide, with Juan playing out seduction routines in modern-day New York complete with cape, mask and Speedy Gonzales accent. But the same bombast spills over into the exchanges between Mickler and his wife. "What happened," he inquires, "to the celestial fires that used to light our way?"

This could be taken to indicate that Juan's romanticism is enriching Mickler's dry, prosaic life, but instead it feels more like a calculated attempt to create high camp. (Hence perhaps the casting of Faye Dunaway, something of a camp icon ever since her portrayal of Joan Crawford in *Mommie Dearest* – although in this she gives her most relaxed and likeable performance for years.) It also allows the film to sidestep the issue it initially raised, the conflict between the two levels of reality – and along the way loses a potentially more interesting plotline, in which Mickler would have to deal with the knowledge that Juan has seduced his wife.

But where Leven's film winds up, intentionally or not, is in the cycle of 'loony chic' movies running parallel to the 'dumb chic' strand currently obsessing Hollywood. 'Dumb chic' (*Forrest Gump*, *IQ*) says the stupid are healthier and clearer-sighted than all those pointy-head intellectuals; 'loony chic' (*Rain Man*, *Regarding Henry*, *Mr Jones*) says that the mentally disturbed are founts of wisdom and integrity who can put the rest of us back in touch with our true selves. (Of recent mainstream Hollywood movies, only Peter Weir's underrated *Fearless* has had the courage to buck this trend.) In conforming to the pattern, *Don Juan DeMarco* reduces one of the great myths of Overreaching to a trite little feelgood parable. Let's hope nobody lends Jeremy Leven a copy of *Faust*.

Philip Kemp



Ruff justice: Johnny Depp

Fresh

USA 1994

Director: Boaz Yakin

Certificate

18
Distributor
 Entertainment
Production Company
 Lumière Pictures
Executive Producer
 Lila Cazes
Producers
 Lawrence Bender
 Randy Ostrow
Co-producer
 Chrisann Verges
Associate Producer
 JoAnn Fregalette Jansen
Production Co-ordinator
 Judith Lyn Brown
Unit Production Manager
 Chrisann Verges
Location Manager
 George Norfleet Jnr
Post-production Supervisor
 Heidi Vogel
Assistant Directors
 J. Miller Tobin
 Mary Jane "M.J." April
 Amy Schmidt
Casting
 Douglas Aibel
 Associate:
 Alysa Wishingrad
 ADR Voice:
 LA Maddogs
Screenplay
 Boaz Yakin
Script Supervisor
 Sarah Auerswald
Director of Photography
 Adam Holender
2nd Unit Directors of Photography
 Bruce MacCallum
 Bill Coleman
Camera Operator
 Dave Knox
Editor
 Dorian Harris
Production Designer
 Dan Leigh
Set Decorators
 Ronald von Blomberg
 Stephanie Carroll
Set Dressers
 Dennis Causey
 Jeff Naparstek
Storyboard Artist
 Erez Yakin
Special Effects
 Al Griswold
 Bill Traynor
Costume Design
 Ellen Lutter
Wardrobe Supervisors
 Jennifer L. Bryan
 Michael Tavares
Make-up
 Anita Gibson
Hair
 Leonard Drake
Title Design
 Balsmeyer & Everett
Titles/Opticals
 Pacific Title
Music
 Stewart Copeland
Music Performed by
 Guitar:
 Michael Thompson
 EVI:
 Judd Miller
 Drums:
 Stewart Copeland
Music Conductors
 Michael Andreas
 String Orchestra:
 Sandy DeCrescent
Music Arranger
 Michael Andreas
Music Producer
 Jeff Seitz
Music Editor
 Michael Dittrock
Music Consultant
 Karyn Rachtman
Songs
 "Ah-Va" by Aida
 Periera, performed
 by Tito Puente

Orchestra; "La que
 mas meneá" by
 and performed by
 Ruben D.J.; "Jesus
 Children of America"
 by Stevie Wonder, "The
 Ghetto" by Hathaway,
 Hutson, performed
 by Johnny Gill
Supervising Sound Editors
 Geoffrey Rubay
 Curt Schulkey
Sound Editors
 David Bartlett
 Ron Bartlett
 John Hulsman
 William Jacobs
 Doug Pearce
 David Whittaker
Sound Mixer
 Michael Barosky
ADR Mixers
 David Boulton
 Christina Tucker
Music Recordists
 Jeff Seitz
 Joseph McGee
Sound Re-recording Mixers
 Ron Bartlett
 Larry Blake
 Ezra Dweck
Foley Artists
 Ellen Heuer
 Robin Harlan
Chess Consultant
 Bruce Pandolfini
Stunt Co-ordinators
 Jeff Ward
 Peter Buccosi

Cast
 Sean Nelson
 Fresh
 Giancarlo Esposito
 Esteban
 Samuel L. Jackson
 Sam
 N'Bushe Wright
 Nichole
 Ron Brice
 Corky
 Jean LaMarre
 Jake
 Jose Zuniga
 Lieutenant Perez
 Luis N. Lantigua
 Chuckie
 Yul Vasquez
 Chillie
 Cheryl Freeman
 Aunt Frances
 Anthony Thomas
 Red
 Curtis McClarin
 Darryl
 Charles Malik Whitfield
 Smokey
 Victor Gonzalez
 Herbie
 Guillermo Diaz
 Spike
 Robert Jimenez
 Salvador
 Jerome Butler
 James
 Cortez Nance Jnr
 Reggie
 Anthony Ruiz
 Hector
 Jacinto Taras Riddick
 Enriquez
 Afi McClendon
 Hilary
 Natima Bradley
 Rosie
 Daiguan Smith
 Tileak
 Jason Rodriguez
 Nicholas
 Mizan Ayers
 Curtis
 Zakee L. Howze
 Mattie
 Davenia McFadden
 Mrs Coleman
 Iraida Polanco
 Rosa Vasquez

Daniela L. Cotton
 Juana
 Tracy Vilar
 Tonye Patano
 Girls
 Randy Ostrow
 Mr Cohen
 Shahid Ali
 Fat Freddie
 Scott Nicholson
 O'Toole
 Matthew Faber
 Long-haired Teenager
 Elizabeth Rodriguez
 Pregnant Woman
 Lawrence Bender
 Yuppie
 Belinda Becker
 Fiona
 Mateo Gomez
 Mexican

Elsie Hilaro
 Aida
 Paul J.Q. Lee
 Tommy Lee
 Joseph Pentangelo
 Transit Cop
 Martin Shakar
 Detective Abe Sharp
 Christopher Scott
 Devon
 Terri Vargas
 Chuckie's Mother
 10,234 feet
 114 minutes
 Dolby stereo
 In colour
 Prints by
 DeLuxe

Fresh is a 12-year-old black New Yorker living with his Aunt Francis and 11 young cousins in a cramped apartment in Brooklyn. In his out-of-school hours he runs drugs, scrupulously secreting his earnings in an empty can hidden in a railway siding. He meets his father, an alcoholic and brilliant speed chess player, in Washington Square, where the elder man passes on to his son the finer points of the game, how to get the measure of his opponent and how to find his weak points.

At school, Fresh is keen on Rosie, who indulges in fantasies about her absent mother who she says is white and wealthy. Fresh is disturbed when his elder sister Nichole moves out of Aunt Francis' crowded apartment. She has developed a heroin dependency, is living with James and working the streets. She has also attracted the sexual attentions of Esteban, a heroin pusher for whom Fresh works, who is married and has two young children. Esteban sees a future for Fresh as a key player in the heroin trade - as long as he does not dabble in crack - while Sam wants him to excel at speed chess.

The sad repetitiveness of Fresh's life is given a tragic focus during a basketball game when Jake, a sidekick of cocaine dealer Corky, is tauntingly outplayed by an unprepossessing kid half his size. In a flash Jake draws a gun and shoots the youngster dead. As the court instantly clears, Fresh is left as the sole witness to the fact that a stray bullet has passed through Rosie's throat. Rosie dies and at the police station, Fresh refuses to name the killer.

Fresh conceives a game plan in which Rosie's death will be avenged and Jake will get his just deserts. He begins to set up Esteban, Corky and James - with his friend Chuckie's help. He uses his own money to buy cocaine saying that the drug is for Corky. He replaces Esteban's heroin with cocaine so that Corky will be convinced that Esteban is moving into his territory. After he and Chuckie are attacked by Corky's men he convinces Corky that Jake has been dealing on his own account. Sceptical at first, Corky finally believes the boy and beats Jake to death with a chain.

James, Fresh claims, is in with Jake. He then lets Esteban fall into the trap. He takes Fresh along with two henchmen on their raid of the shop, which is

virtually blown up before Fresh's eyes. Afraid of what Esteban might do to his sister, Fresh slips off and phones Lieutenant Perez telling him that Esteban is at the flat and attacking Nichole. Before the Lieutenant arrives, Fresh plants a gun and drugs on the unwary Esteban. As he is taken away Esteban realizes who has betrayed him. Perez promises Fresh and Nichole that he will find them a place of safety. Some time later, Sam is shocked to see tears in his son's eyes as they begin their regular game.

If Fresh's territory of drugs and violence in the New York black and Hispanic ghetto is familiar, the way it is approached is not. The film's tone is resolutely dark and devoid of the celebratory, cartoon-like violence or street sassiness that is endemic in Hollywood exploitations of black street culture. Fresh, the 12-year-old protagonist, is dispassionate and withdrawn. The characters with whom he interacts are grotesques of various kinds. Mercifully without 'attitude', they are shown as warped, like the fabric of the city they inhabit, and wounded by their circumstances. Deprived of language (Fresh's father apart, no one else seems to have access to a vocabulary of more than 25 words except for expletives), their minds are limited to only the most rudimentary of thought processes, so the terrified Fresh is able to run intellectual rings around his elders while putting his master plan into action. However, unlike the screen heroes whom both Jake, the frustrated basketball player, and Esteban, 'body-built' in the Van Damme mould, seem to emulate physically, these characters are not shown in quasi-heroic high relief, stripped of their social ties, but instead are depicted as part of a community.

As Fresh does his pre-school drug round he is offered those talismanic tokens of All-American suburban wholesomeness, milk and chocolate chip cookies, by a grandmotherly sort who passes him that day's stash of drugs. Esteban (a notably strong performance from Giancarlo Esposito as a character descended half from the films of Jean-Pierre Melville and half from the morally ambiguous Antonio of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*) thoughtfully gets his youngest child off to sleep while advising Fresh on how to become 'the man' in the heroin trade in a room which contains both an elaborate family altar and numerous crucifixes. The film's weaknesses stem from Yakin's reluctance to fight himself loose of his own slightly over-written script. Need Sam's instructions to his son over the chessboard signal the plot of the film so clearly? Need, in fact, Samuel L Jackson be handed quite such a theatrical old war-horse of a part as Fresh's father, chess genius and philosopher of the bottle? And in stopping short of the grinding pain of the father-son reconciliation that Sergei Bodrov allows his child protagonist in the similar *Freedom is Paradise*, Yakin lets his own film peter out in tears.

Verina Glaessner

Fun

Canada/USA 1994

Director: Rafal Zielinski

Certificate
 Not yet issued
Distributor
 Metro Tartan
Production Company
 James R. Zatulokin
 presents
 In association with
 Prerogative
 Productions
 Lighthouse
 Entertainment
 A Neo-Modern
 Entertainment
 Corporation
 production
Executive Producers
 Rana Joy Glickman
 Jeff Kirshbaum
Producer
 Rafal Zielinski
Co-producer
 Damian Lee
Production Consultant
 Canada:
 Julian Grant
Associate Producers
 Jeff Sackman
 Monika Lightstone
Production Co-ordinators
 Gloria Zimmerman
 Nadia Rajewski
Production Managers
 Sharon Ben-Tal
 Canada:
 Helder Goncalves
Location Manager
 Dennis C. Tyler
Post-production Supervisors
 Monika Lightstone
 Barry Silver
Assistant Director
 Rick Baer
Casting
 Cathy Brown
 Marki Costello
Screenplay
 James Bosley
 Based on his play
 "FUN"
Screenplay Consultant
 Matthew Posey
Script Supervisor
 Jesse Wolfe
Director of Photography
 Jens Sturup
2nd Unit Canera
 Donald Luczak
Steadicam Operator
 Steve Adelson
Editor
 Monika Lightstone
Associate Editor
 Barry Silver
Production Designer
 Vally Mestroni
Special Effects
 Denise Fischer
Costume Design
 Renee Johnston
Wardrobe Supervisor
 Victoria Radu
Make-up/Hair
 Denise Fischer
Music
 Marc Tschanz
Music Supervisor
 Dawn Solér
Music Editor
 David Trevis
Songs/Music Extracts
 "Happy House" by Peter
 Coyte, John Ibert,
 "Suburbia" by Peter
 Coyte, "Pendulum" by
 Peter Coyte, "Every
 Valley Shall Be
 Exalted", "And He Shall
 Purify" from Messiah by
 George Frideric Handel
Sound Design
 Nancy Tracy
 Dave Nelson
Sound
 Andy Koyama

Dialogue Editors
 Joe Bini
 Josh Rosen
 Nancy Tracy
ADR Supervisor
 Avram Dean Gold
ADR Editor
 Darrell Hanzakk
Production Sound Mixers
 Arnold Brown
 Laurent Wassmer
ADR Recordists
 Brion Paccassi
 Tami Treadwell
Re-recording Mixer
 Andy Koyama
ADR Re-recording Mixer
 Bob Deschaine
Sound Effects Editors
 Eric Holland
 Nancy Tracy
 David E. Nelson
Foley Artist
 Steve Bain
Foley Recordist
 Steve Copley
Psychological Consultant
 Lisa Rose Apramian
Production Consultants
 Jon Derovan
 Rick Murken

Cast
 Renee Humphrey
 Hilary
 Alicia Witt
 Bonnie
 William R. Moses
 John
 Leslie Hope
 Jane
 Ania Suli
 Mrs Farmer
 James J. Howard Jnr
 Frederick D. Adams
 Male Prison Guards
 Mary Ann Norment
 Sabrina Ortega
 Patrice F. Battle
 Carmina Rubalcava
 Malquale Garcia
 Female Prison Guards
 Candie Northrup
 Prison Librarian
 Denise Fischer
 Sharon Ben-Tal
 Amy Bateman
 Dona J. Pacitti
 Cynthia Farris
 Leah Kourtnie Ballantine
 Amanda Blackholly
 Kimberly Ann Ross
 Dana Maria Thomas
 Ashley Michael Lauren
 Immates
 Rochelle Roderick
 Steven Givens
 Gregory Steven Ferrett
 Mrs Farmer's
 Neighbours
 Steve Adelson
 Gas Station Attendant
 Alan Shapiro
 Record Store Manager
 Victoria Radu
 Nurse
 Jonathan Lightstone
 Gillian Lightstone
 Alexander Hecht
 Elizabeth Hecht
 James Youngman
 Jaime Anderson
 Chris Gillett
 Kids

TBC feet
 TBC minutes

Dolby stereo
 Black and white/Colour

● Having been convicted for the killing of an old woman, teenagers Bonnie and Hilary are kept at a detention centre. They are individually questioned by Jane, a counsellor, and John, a journalist, both of whom are attempting to find out why the girls committed the crime. Their story is told in intermittent flashbacks.

On the morning of the crime the girls strike up an instant friendship. They go on a shop-lifting spree, visit a photo-booth, but gradually become bored. They start to wander around the housing estates, playing various pranks on those who live there. They decide that they want to get into one of the houses. Pretending that Bonnie is not feeling very well, they inveigle their way into the house of an elderly woman who takes pity on them. When the woman gets suspicious they panic. For no apparent reason Bonnie stabs the woman to death and the two take flight, running back to Hilary's house.

As they try to piece the story together, Jane and John use different approaches to establish a rapport with Bonnie and Hilary. Jane reveals her own dysfunctional past to Hilary, while John promises to help reunite them. The two girls are kept apart despite protests. Hilary keeps a diary and writes poetry which John says he wants to publish. Later Hilary accuses Bonnie of lying. The two girls meet briefly during study time in the library and cause a commotion. A decision is made to send Bonnie to another detention centre. She jumps from a high walkway, is hospitalized and later dies from her injuries. Hilary is seemingly unaffected by her death.

● *Fun* could be described as a *The Girls Next Door* for the 1990s. It shares with the Penelope Spheeris film the same bleak and characterless suburban terrain that is now all too familiar: rows of neatly kept houses with clipped lawns and white picket fences and roads going nowhere other than from one shopping arcade to another. Similarly, Bonnie and Hilary are presented as ostensibly normal Gap-wearing kids, although their restlessness soon becomes apparent through the shrill and amateurish performances of Renee Humphrey and Alicia Witt. We glimpse them first in Hilary's bedroom where they are preparing for Bonnie's stayover, sharing make-up and paja-

mas. But swiftly the film makes manifest the nature of their crime as it segues between the detention centre and the events leading up to their committal. *Fun*'s concern, then, is not with what they did but why they did it.

With the prison interviews predominating, *Fun*'s theatre roots are only too evident. These scenes provide the substance of the film and one wishes that director Rafal Zielinski had elaborated further on them rather than continually flipping into the past. When asked why they killed the old woman, the girls reply that it was for "Fun....fun is the only thing that I believe in". They define fun as "doing something that I haven't done before." It's a suitably amoral slogan for the self-serve generation, but the film is less concerned with mulling over the disturbing implications of the murder as it is in investigating how such an act can be spun out retrospectively as drama. Tension is sought between the attempt to explain and the knowledge that - as with Hilary's diary of which she says: "some of it is true, some of it is made up" - there is always going to be some uncertainty about the girls' motives. This uncertainty defines the difference between Jane and John as investigators. As Jane tells John, it is he, as a journalist, who "has the license to connect the dots, fill in the blanks."

It is also clear that Jane and John have their own motives. John may feel that he has a story of social importance to tell, but he also wants journalistic glory. Jane assesses the girls for their own benefit but she also has personal reasons for helping them because she recognises something of herself in Hilary. It is therefore easy for the girls as media-literates brought up in the culture of *Oprah* to turn the tables. They talk about being abused as children - something which may or may not be true. John wants to know whether they have had a lesbian relationship: "That would be perfect for the TV movie - with Drew Barrymore," Hilary cannily replies. Their stance is a shrewd move on the part of the film-makers, since it contextualizes *Fun* in terms of the renewed interest in wayward girls (for example *Heavenly Creatures* and *Butterfly Kiss*) and it helps to distance the film from 'slammer chick' exploitation antecedents that might make *Fun* look more than a little anaemic.

Lizzie Francke

A Great Day In Harlem

USA 1994

Director: Jean Bach

Certificate

U

Distributor

Pearlshine

Production Company

Jean Bach productions

With financial assistance from

The Jane and Lloyd

Pettit Foundation

Flo-Bert

New York Foundation

for the Arts

Producer

Jean Bach

Co-producer

Matthew Seig

Associate Producer

Stuart Samuels

Screenplay

Jean Bach

Susan Peehl

Matthew Seig

Director of Photography

Steve Petropoulos

Additional Photography

Del Hall

Animation Photography

Ralph Petri

Original Film

Mona Hinton

Milt Hinton

Original Photograph

Art Kane

Editors

Susan Peehl

On-line:

Phil Fallo

Title Design

Andreas Combüchen

Animation:

Michael Bianchi

Music Consultant

Mark Cantor

Sound Recordists

Steven Hertzog

Judy Benjamin

Neil Gettinger

Sound Re-recordist

Roy B. Yokelson

Sound Effects

Chris Burke

Archival Consultant

Mark Cantor

Performance Footage

Mark Cantor

Rossetta Reitz

Film Extracts

The Sound of Jazz (1957)

Narrator

Quincy Jones

Featuring:

Dizzy Gillespie

Art Blakey

Art Farmer

Chubby Jackson

Paula Morris

Marian McPartland

Eddie Locke

Ernie Wilkins

Mona Hinton

Robert Benton

Sonny Rollins

Hank Jones

Johnny Griffin

Scoville Browne

Taft Jordan Jr

Bud Freeman

Gerry Mulligan

Elaine Lorillard

Robert Altschuler

Steve Frankfurt

Buck Clayton

Horace Silver

Milt Hinton

Felix Maxwell

Everard Powell

Max Kaminsky

Benny Golson

Nat Hentoff

Mike Lipskin

5.362 feet

60 minutes

Black and white and colour

● A black and white still of a crowd in a street opens the film. It's a unique and immensely famous photograph in the jazz world, of 57 musicians and one club owner. It was taken one August morning in 1958, and first published in 1959 in a special jazz issue of *Esquire*; it's unique because well-known figures from every jazz generation then active were present, among them Coleman Hawkins and Henry 'Red' Allen from the 20s, Lester Young from the swing era, Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk from bop, and Horace Silver and Sonny Rollins, young men who would come to jazz stardom in the decade that followed. Mostly in their Sunday best, they're arrayed along the curb, or standing behind on the walk-up to a Harlem brownstone. A gaggle of small boys sits in front of them. We move in close and see that, on the extreme right, Dizzy Gillespie has just tapped Roy Eldridge on the shoulder, and, as he turned, put his tongue out. "This probably is the greatest picture of that era of musicians ever taken," says an as-yet unidentified voice. "And I'm so proud of it."

A documentary about the circumstances surrounding the photo, *A Great Day In Harlem* cuts together a multiplic-

ity of rival takes, other photos and home movies from the same day with talking-head and voice-over reminiscences from surviving musicians and others involved in the shoot's organisation, and with archive stills, promo shorts and extracts from the 50s *Sound of Jazz* television series, and others.

First the scene is set: we learn how Robert Benton, art director at *Esquire*, and jazz fan, asked photographer and freelance art director Art Kane, a novice without a studio, to come up with something for the special edition. Then the focus is turned to the music and personalities of some of those present: Luckey Roberts the stride pianist, the oldest present; the enigmatic Monk; Mary Lou Williams, the first woman in jazz actually to impress her male colleagues. We hear from those who took their own pictures: bassist Milt Hinton and his wife Mona, who'd brought a little colour cine-camera, and one Mike Lipskin, a devotee of pianist Willie 'The Lion' Smith. We hear the story of the morning, from musicians rising far earlier than normal, to the panic of the inexperienced Kane and his assistants; we learn why Basie is seated on the curb, and of how all the kids came to be in the photo also; we learn how Dizzy made it his business to bug his idol Eldridge, and how - in the opinion of his peers - this photo catches the essence of both men, and many others.

● In the film's closing moments, trumpeter Art Farmer discusses how strange it is to look at this picture and consider those no longer with us: because for "us", he says (meaning jazz musicians), "We don't think about people not being here... Lester Young is here. Coleman Hawkins is here. Roy Eldridge is here. They are in us, and they will always be alive." Think of the film - conceived when Jean Bach realised that only a handful of those in the picture still survived - as a classic Big Band performance. In jazz, the improvisation fills in, deflects, re-scripts, and animates the original tune. Here, the picture itself is the tune; the solos are the promo shorts and old television clips of particular musicians playing, and - crucially, affirming Farmer's point - the tales and memories and plain fandom of musicians still alive towards these players. So that the matter of the documentary riffs off the matter of the photo, with all its visible and hidden little narratives, honing some 60 hours of interview down to clusters of different takes on similar ideas. Some of the best of Susan Peehl's editing, of blow-ups of Kane's unused takes, turns the stills into a kind of flickerbook movie, so that people jostle, joke and chatter. This, together with the gentle shock of the Hinton's grainy, colour home-movie footage, desolidifies the iconic, turning a frozen public media-moment back to semi-private street party. The records of this era still have a striking lived immediacy; so do the films. The documentary strives, with their help, to counter the intimations of mortality that any old photo is thick with.



Bad for a day: Renee Humphrey, Alicia Witt

◀ It isn't always successful in this. The opening credits are frenzied, as if to "jazz up" the still in a rather trivial sense. The use of music sometimes tumbles into mere generic backing track, tasteful but anonymous, especially when removed from context, or used for links. We've learnt too well, after decades of jazz soundtracks, to hear without listening: paradoxically, more silence might have done the musicians less of a disservice, by heightening the pleasures of the times when we did get to listen. As it is, some of the most potent, intriguing, unstable moments are provided by the shorts and black and white TV fragments: plump, impeccably turned-out Henry 'Red' Allen, a clown-showman in the Armstrong mould when singing, becomes a trumpeter with a brooding, quietly wracked tone when playing; mournful and sallow-faced Pee Wee Russell plays old-school clarinet with a fabulous, slithering oddness; there's a bafflingly unlikely clip of bassist Charles Mingus in *All Night Long*, the 1961 British jazz thriller, alongside Patrick MacGoohan and a youthful Richard Attenborough (who calls Mingus "man"). In a 40s short, Maxine Sullivan is heartstoppingly cute, the Toni Braxton of her day; in a photo seen only for a moment, Sonny Rollins has a mohawk.

Hinton looks at one of the photos he took, and sees Sullivan: "very young, beautiful". Beautiful, yes, but very young? She was born a year after Hinton, who was 49 in 1959. When old men reminisce, they also sentimentalise a little. Almost no one attempts in the interviews and anecdotes to challenge or jolt this mood; pianist Hank Jones comes closest, his deadpan contribution being to analyse every participant in relation to their gain in or loss of weight since that day. Kane demystifies himself likeably: "This idiot kid," he calls himself. "I never felt so alone in my life." But it's hard to avoid the irony that with this project he was contributing to exactly the iconogra-

phy which was to stifle the music's meaning and to alienate newcomers to it. The film's title-typography is a homage to the design world of the late 50s, with its arty magazines and album covers; Benton and Kane belonged to this world, of course, but it spoke to a haughty up-scale hipness curiously divorced from the lives of the musicians it framed, for whom the thrill of this day is meeting one another rather than getting into *Esquire*. (There's another sadness here: Kane, this well-meaning, talented, courageous jazz fan, committed suicide this February.)

There are omissions. We never learn why, if Willie 'The Lion' Smith took the trouble to get up early and come to the shoot, he isn't actually in the picture: several other (admittedly minor) figures are neither interviewed nor mentioned. In a wider sense, the historical context is left unspoken: 1958 was actually a threshold year, as no one here could have known. Free Jazz – in the shape of Ornette Coleman – was soon to cause a lasting, angry, politicised rift in jazz: the formality of these suits and the courteous reserve of some of those wearing them would be succeeded by dashikis and rage. The kids in the foreground would not, on the whole, grow up to be even mildly interested, let alone fans. There's a mortality that all the clips and talk and casual, intimate movement cannot quite cast a spell against; that of the music itself, in its full, living unity and community. The old guard might have been around for some years yet, but this was surely the last possible moment when such a project could have been undertaken. The very magazine media that so lovingly set out to record this scene were with their "special jazz issues" unwittingly helping occlude it as a living, changing thing, embalming it in within the celebration of itself.

Which does matter; though the failure to touch on it only very slightly mars a likeable, intelligently original and moving documentary.

Mark Sinker



Everybody wants to be a cat: 57 varieties of Jazz Musician

Imaginary Crimes

USA 1994

Director: Anthony Drazan

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Morgan Creek

Productions

Executive Producers

Gary Barber

Ted Field

Robert W. Cort

Producer

James G. Robinson

Co-producers

Stan Wlodkowski

Kristine Johnson

Davia Nelson

Line Producer

Stan Wlodkowski

Production Supervisors

Tom Tucker

Todd P. Smith

Supervising Production

Co-ordinator

Louise Rosner

Production Co-ordinator

Vera Golakova

Production Manager

Stan Wlodkowski

Location Manager

Margot Bridger

Post-production Supervisor

Jody Levin

Assistant Directors

Linda Fox

Merrilee A. Dale

Jill Maxcy

Casting

Deborah Aquila

Jane Shannon

Portland:

Megann Ratzow

Los Angeles Associate:

Jerry Propanik

Screenplay

Kristine Johnson

Davia Nelson

Based on the book by

Sheila Ballantyne

Script Supervisor

Rebecca Long

Director of Photography

John J. Campbell

Camera Operators

B:

Carl Davis

Randolph Sellers

Editor

Elizabeth Kling

Associate Editor

Peter B. Ellis

Production Designer

Joseph T. Garrity

Art Director

Pat Tagliaferro

Set Decorator

Dena Roth

Set Dressers

Michael Moran

Roman Guenther

Carl Winter

Damon Sullivan

Nina Bradford

Costume Design

Susan Lyall

Costume Supervisor

Laura Goldsmith

Make-up/Hair

Supervisor:

Kelcey Fry

Additional:

Georgie Abraham

Sherilyn Lawson

Key Hairstylist

Brenda McNally

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Music/Music

Conductor/Orchestrations

Stephen Endelman

Music Editor

Christopher Kennedy

Songs/Music Extracts

"Don't Fence Me In"

by Cole Porter; "This I

Swear" by Joe Rock,

Lennie Martin & The

Skyliners, performed

by The Skyliners;

"Chiquita Banana"

by Leonard MacKenzie,

Garth Montgomery,

William Wirges; "Over

and Over" by Robert

Byrd, performed by

Bobby Day; "Make

Room in Your Heart

(for a Memory)" by and

performed by Hank

Thompson; "June in

January" by Leo Robin,

Ralph Rainger; "In the

Middle of a Kiss"

by Sam Coslow,

performed by Julie

London; "Fall Out"

by Gerry Mulligan,

Paul Desmond,

performed by Gerry

Mulligan; "Tumbling

Tumbleweeds" by Bob

Nolan, performed by

Sons of the Pioneers;

"All in My Mind"

by Freddy Johnson,

Maxine Brown, Leroy

Kirkland, performed

by Maxine Brown;

"Would It Matter At

All" by and performed

by Jim Gatlif;

"Hawaiian Eye" by

Mac David, Jerry

Livingston; "Symphony

No. 1 in F, Op. 10" by

Dmitri Shostakovich,

performed by The

Scottish National

Orchestra, conductor,

Neemi Järvi

Supervising Sound Editor

Skip Lievsay

Dialogue Editors

Fred Rosenberg

Laura Civiello

ADR Editor

Marissa Littlefield

Foley Supervisor

Stuart Levy

Foley Editors

Steve Visscher

Eliza Paley

Frank Kern

Sound Mixer

Mark Ulano

Re-recording Mixers

Greg Orloff

Skip Lievsay

Foley Walker

Marko Costanzo

Stunt Co-ordinator

David Boushey

Film Extracts

Goodbye My Fancy (1951)

Cast

Harvey Keitel

Ray Weiler

Fairuzza Balk

Sonya

Kelly Lynch

Valery

Vincent D'Onofrio

Mr Webster

Diane Baker

Abigale Tate

Chris Penn

Jarvis

Amber Benson

Margaret

Elisabeth Moss

Greta

Richard Venture

Judge Klein

Seymour Cassel

Eddie

Tori Paul

Young Sonya

Melissa Bernstein

Gigi Rucklehaus

Annette O'Toole

Ginny Rucklehaus

Bill Geisslinger

Bud Rucklehaus

William Shilling

Mr Garrity

Luke Reilly

Everett

Peggy Gormley

Mrs Cole

Chad Burton

Vern

April Henderson

Roxie

Rebecca Long

Theatre Manager

Diana Van Fossen

Kitty Larsen

Mothers at Tea

Tiffany Goodwin

Kelley Marcum

Kelly Mazur

Zoe McLellan

Katie Pluchos

Jessica Rawlins

Edgemont Girls

Carol Povey

Nona

Kelsea Aryn Graham

Young Greta

Jefferson Davis

Test Centre Teacher

Pirkko Haavisto

Finnish Housekeeper

J. R. Knotts

Foreman

Greg Gormann

Mr Drew

Robert Blanche

Ken Giliam

Policemen

Steven Clark Pachosa

Roger Wilson

Reno Men

9467 feet

105 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Typical of Ray Weiler, as recalled in later years by his daughter Sonya, is the time he takes her out to buy ice cream on the coldest night of the year. The cost goes on the tab while Ray excitedly outlines a scheme of partnership with the weary shopkeeper. This was Ray's style. When the Weiler's home-help walks out, complaining she hasn't been paid, Sonya and her younger sister Greta reckon this is the twelfth home-help they've lost since their mother died, but their father's buoyant spirits are seemingly undampened. He takes Sonya for enrolment at Edgemont School where her mother, Valery, was once a pupil, and charms the Headmistress, Miss Tate, into disregarding both the fact that term has already started and that he has forgotten to bring his chequebook. Sonya remembers how she and her mother would be similarly charmed by Ray's eloquence and as quickly disillusioned.

At Edgemont, Sonya is encouraged by Mr Webster, the English teacher, to work on her writing skills; her essays are about what she knows best – life with father. While dodging the landlord's rent demands, Ray has developed a mining project with his friend Eddie that will, he says, make them all rich. The promise has been heard many times before: Valery used to escape from it by taking Sonya to Joan Crawford movies. Cultivating the other Edgemont parents, Ray manages to meet with local banker Bud Rucklehouse and Sonya overhears him launching into the familiar chance-of-a-lifetime assurances. She is reminded of the summer when her mother was found to have cancer; somehow Ray managed to arrange for Valery to live in a new house before she died.

Just in time to pacify the landlord, Ray suddenly has bundles of cash, but their affluence is soon dissipated. Taking its place is a growing hostility between Ray and Sonya, whose maturing literacy is regarded uneasily by her father. As Sonya learns she has been accepted by the University of California, Ray's creditors close in and he is put behind bars until Webster quietly pays his bail. Ray collects his daughters and sets out for Reno in the car, but Sonya refuses to accompany him and takes the reluctant Greta back home. Soon a social worker separates them



On the edge of fiction: Fairuza Balk, Harvey Keitel

both. In Reno, Ray and Eddie are offered the chance of a shady get-rich-quick scheme, but Ray realises this is a dangerous turning point and goes back to face his punishment. As Sonya celebrates with the Edgemont Class of 1962, cheered on by Mr Webster, she is reunited with Ray and Greta. Years later, as she describes in a novel, her father – still hunting his fortune – goes into the mountains and dies in the winter snows.

The courage of the single parent makes a convenient cinematic peg for displaying colourful nostalgia. The format of *Imaginary Crimes*, close on the heels of *Gas, Food, Lodging* and *A Home of Our Own* and close in spirit to *Housekeeping*, also emulates *To Kill a Mockingbird* in attempting to recapture the mood of a specific period of parenting, its look, its sound, and its ethics. Where *Mockingbird's* Atticus, however, was the ultimate in father-figures, encased in an unyielding integrity, the floundering Ray Weiler is fascinatingly fallible, to be trusted only in his resilience and his fierce loyalty to his family. Interpreted through his daughter's eyes he is part-myth, part-Micawber, offered in exasperated affection as a miscast mystery, constantly striving to do the right thing in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Of this obsessive figure, marooned on the edge of fiction by a biographer who admitted to having no idea for most of their life together what he did all day, Harvey Keitel fashions an enjoyable complexity, a bad lieutenant without the lapses. The strutting, the fast talking, and the intensity of gaze are standard Keitel tricks, but the transparency is something new: vulnerable and Chaplinesque, perpetually within a few days' reach of the jackpot, he is a dreamer because without dreams his would be an intolerable predicament. Offsetting the scenes of blatant bluster – the neatly negotiated thawing of the headmistress, the verbal seduction of a whole tea party of impressionable ladies, the inventive disarming of a hostile creditor – are times when the rhetoric runs dry and Ray can only resort to near-speechless pleading which finds in Keitel a powerful orator.

Underlying these helpless hesitations is the unmentioned, dimly recognised, sexual tension between the father and

the daughter who has slowly taken over her mother's role. Disconcertingly shifting around on the timescale, *Imaginary Crimes* is uncertain of its 'present', which at the end even appears abruptly to be some years in the future, but its primary reminiscences, right from the early childhood glimpse of Sonya imitating Carmen Miranda for her father's entertainment, are all concerned with emotional crisis points. There is the outing in the woods when Sonya's patience with Ray's 'basic rules of the forest' routine snaps into furious revolt and they stand trembling at each other in an edgy physicality. There is the incident when Ray finds a copy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in Sonya's room and protests with an inarticulate panic. And most revealingly to them both there is his response to the news of her acceptance by the University: "Your Daddy knows about Professors – they'll ruin everything you and your Daddy hold precious..." This is biography as catharsis, unfolding in glances and movement rather than in words.

With his second film (his first, *Zebrahead*, appeared at the Sundance Festival in 1992), Anthony Drazan plays safe by concentrating on Keitel and using Sonya's commentary with lashings of orchestral emphasis to tell us what we're watching and how we should be feeling about it. His piecemeal structure forgets at times to paper over the joins, particularly when dealing with Sonya's schooldays and her encouragement by the altruistic Mr Webster (played by Vincent D'Onofrio with an appealing dignity) whose affection for Walt Whitman has no discernible effect – his pupils mostly prefer Frankie Avalon – and who is mysteriously spied upon in one episode without preamble or consequence. For the account of Greta's deafness, Drazan shifts into subjective monochrome, an irrelevant experiment which, like the peculiar intrusion of a dancing-class, is at odds with a generally more careful formalism. The occasional awkwardness is also echoed by Fairuza Balk who, repeating her wide-eyed and slightly aggrieved appearances in *Gas, Food, Lodging* and *Murder in the Heartland*, imparts an understandable, if oddly dispassionate, stoicism. Even if she could, she is clearly not about to steal Keitel's thunder.

Philip Strick

Jack & Sarah

UK 1995

Dir: Tim Sullivan

Certificate

15

Distributor

PolyGram

Production Company

PolyGram Filmed Entertainment
With the participation of British Screen
Canal Plus presents
A Granada Film
In association with
Mainstream SA

Producers

Pippa Cross

Simon Channing-Williams

Janette Day

Production Executive

Craig McNeil

Production Associate

Tessa Gibbs

Production Supervisor

Georgina Lowe

Production Co-ordinator

Stephanie Faugier

Location Manager

Mark Mostyn

Assistant Directors

Ian Madden

Cliff Lanning

Josh Robertson

Casting

Director:

Simone Reynolds

USA:

Elisabeth Leustig

Mary-Gail Artz

Barbara Cohen

France:

Kate Dowd

Screenplay

Tim Sullivan

Continuity/

Script Supervisor

Heather Storr

Director of Photography

Jean-Yves Escoffier

Editor

Lesley Walker

Production Designer

Christopher J. Bradshaw

Art Director

Humphrey Bingham

Costume Design

Dany Everett

Wardrobe Master

Steve Hubbard

Chief Make-up/Hair

Christine Beveridge

Title Design

Murray Cook

Music

Simon Boswell

Music Editor

Kevin Lane

Sound Editor

Peter Pennell

Dialogue Editor

Alan Paley

Sound Mixers

Ken Weston

Dean Humphries

ADR/Footsteps Mixer

John Bateman

Stunt Co-ordinator

Nick Powell

Cast

Richard E. Grant

Jack

Samantha Mathis

Amy

Judi Dench

Margaret

Ian McKellen

William

Cherie Lunghi

Anna

Eileen Atkins

Phil

Imogen Stubbs

Sarah

David Swift

Michael

Laurent Grevill

Alain

Kate Hardie

Pamela

Bianca Lee

Sophia Lee

Baby Sarah

Sophia Sullivan

Sarah as a toddler

Niven Boyd

Nathaniel

Tracy Thorne

Susan

Lorraine Ashbourne

Jackie

Deborah Findlay

Miss Cartwright

Claire Toeman

Health Visitor

Geff Francis

Rob

Matylok Gibbs

Physiotherapist

Michael McStay

Security Man

James Bannon

City Boy

David J. Nicholas

Delivery Man

Susie McKenna

Paramedic

Keith Bartlett
Taxi Driver
John Grillo
Landlord
Richard Leaf
Stoned Man
Andrew Read
Office Boy

Raymond Brodie
Office Party Guest

9,900 feet
110 minutes

Dolby stereo
in colour

Jack, a successful lawyer, and his pregnant wife Sarah, are busy fixing up their new home when Sarah goes into premature labour and dies in childbirth. Jack, utterly despondent, lets his own parents and Sarah's mother, Phil, take up the responsibility of caring for his newborn daughter while he goes on an extended drinking binge with a homeless, well-spoken man named William. Jack's interfering mother Margaret and psychiatrist father Michael collude with Phil to leave the baby beside a passed-out Jack. When roused by the baby's cries, he soon comes round to caring for it and names it Sarah after his dead wife.

Jack tries to take the baby in to work, but when that proves impractical, he searches for a nanny. At a restaurant he meets Amy, an American waitress exploited by her boss and lover, Alain. Despite her inexperience and the disapproval from Margaret, Phil, and William, who is now detoxified and staying with Jack as a housekeeper, Jack hires Amy. Already estranged, Amy and Alain split up and Jack pretends to be intimate with Amy when Alain visits to further alienate him. Although living together proves in some ways a strain, Jack and Amy become platonically close. The disapproving William gets drunk and messes the house up, but Amy and Phil manage to clean up and smuggle him out before Jack comes home.

When Jack starts dating Anna, a senior partner at his law firm, Amy becomes jealous and moves out. Jack hires a prim English nanny keen on discipline, but just when he realizes he really cares for Amy, he sees her one day among a wedding party, kissing Alain, and assumes she has married him. Phil sets up a meeting with Jack and Amy, (who explains that he had ▶



Pillow talk: Richard E. Grant, Bianca Lee

◀ seen her merely congratulating Alain on his wedding to her friend Susan) and they are romantically reunited. The final scene is of a wedding, which actually turns out to be Phil and William's, but shots of Jack, Amy, and Sarah establish that they are clearly a family now.

● *Jack & Sarah* looks as if it were conceived as an exploitation of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* but the budget only extended as far as one and a half weddings, and an offstage funeral. Nonetheless, it does offer an all-luvvie cast culled from what counts in Britain as an A-list of stars: Richard E. Grant, Judi Dench, Ian McKellen, Eileen Atkins, Imogen Stubbs, David Swift, Kate Hardie and others, all make up an impressive roster. They've even taken Cherie Lunghi away from her Kenco Coffee commercials (admittedly for an almost identical role) and rustled up the obligatory minor American starlet, Samantha Mathis, without which no British film is reckoned capable of surviving in the American market. All their efforts are somewhat in vain, however, since not only does the script lack the tooled precision of the most successful British film of all time (*Four Weddings*) but also the baby thespians playing the infant Sarah steal every scene in which they appear.

Performances aside, there's isn't much to recommend *Jack & Sarah*, although given writer/director Tim Mitchell's cloying premise, it could have been much worse. A melancholy gloom pervades the film after the first Sarah's death, making the frothy central romance seem a little flat, although this may be down to inept photography (individual shots in the print that I saw were badly out of focus). Similarly, when clucking over his charges Richard E. Grant coaxes up moments of tender spontaneous warmth as Jack, but only in between long stretches of actorly posturing that's as clockwork as central heating. All the same, you warm to him even when he's on auto.

Throughout, *Jack & Sarah* feels like huge chunks of exposition have been ripped from its shooting script. The audience is left distractedly wondering about such questions as how and why the first Sarah dies, how much time has passed between scenes, when did William get reformed, and why he suddenly marries Phil? A potentially incisive critique of upper middle class British childrearing traditions and the hypocrisy surrounding attitudes to male and female single parents is smothered inside the carapace of the final product. With its smart set that looks like a Heals showroom, and equally iconic and well-dressed characters, you can see a much better, fitfully-tragic situation comedy series trying to escape its feature-length confines. Considering that it was the television company, Granada, that produced it, *Jack & Sarah* may then constitute a different kind of lost opportunity than the familiar British movie also-ran.

Leslie Felperin

Jefferson in Paris

USA 1995

Director: James Ivory

Certificate

12
Distributor
 Buena Vista
Production Company
 Merchant Ivory productions
Executive Producers
 Donald Rosenfeld
 Paul Bradley
Producer
 Ismail Merchant
Co-producer
 Humbert Balsan
Production Co-ordinator
 Kathryn Martin
Unit Manager
 Alexander Deon
Location Managers
 Daniel Chabannes
 de Sars
 Fabrizio Mosca
2nd Unit Director
 Hugues de Laugardiere
Assistant Directors
 Simon Mosely
 Frederic Nicolas
 Christopher Granier-Deferre
 Alexis Bernier
 Damienne Caron
 Fred Kerner
 Catherine Rubin
Casting
 Paris:
 Sylvie Brochere
 New York:
 Joanna Merlin
 London:
 Celestia Fox
Screenplay
 Ruth Prawer Jhabvala
French Dialogue
 Anne Dutter
 George Dutter
Script Supervisor
 Jacqueline Gamard
Director of Photography
 Pierre Lhomme
2nd Unit Director of Photography
 Larry Pizer
Camera Operator
 Kevin Jewison
Editors
 Andrew Marcus
 Isabelle Lorente
Production Designer
 Guy-Claude Françoise
Art Director
 Thierry François
Set Decorator
 Bernadette Saint-Loubert
Calligraphy
 Jacques Le Roux
 Nicole Robinson
Puppetmaker
 Jean-Marc Herve
Costume Design
 Jenny Beavan
 John Bright
Costume Co-ordinators
 Janet Teabrooke
 Loveleen Baines
 Shahnaz Vahanvati
Wardrobe Supervisor
 Eve-Marie Arnault
Milliner
 Pippa Cleator
Make-up
 Carol Hemming
 Tina Earnshaw
Special Make-up Effects
 Pauline Heys
Hairstylist
 Carol Hemming
Title Design
 Barbra Flinder
Titles/Opticals
 Peerless Camera Co.
 Excalibur
Music
 Richard Robbins
Music Conductor
 Harry Rabinowitz
Orchestrations
 Geoffrey Alexander

Historical Music Supervisor

David Bahanovich
Music Editor
 Gerard McCann
Scenes from Antonio Sacchini's "Dardanus"
 Orchestra:
 Les Arts Florissants
 Music Director:
 William Christie
Choreography
 "Dardanus":
 Beatrice Massin
Dancers:
 La Compagnie Fetes Galantes
 Sally's Dance:
 Elizabeth Aldrich
Sound Design
 Laurent Quaglio
Dialogue Editor
 Anne-Marie Leduc
ADR Editors
 Jacques Levy
 Robert Gavin
Foley Editor
 Jean Pierre Lelong
Sound Recordist
 Mike Shoring
Research
 Historical:
 Herve Gransart
 Story:
 Anthony Chase
Versailles Etiquette Adviser
 Richard Flahaut

Cast

Nick Nolte
 Thomas Jefferson
 Greta Scacchi
 Maria Cosway
 Simon Callow
 Richard Cosway
 Gwyneth Paltrow
 Patsy Jefferson
 Estelle Ennet
 Polly Jefferson
 Thandie Newton
 Sally Hemings
 Seth Gilliam
 James Hemings
 Todd Boyce
 William Short
 Nigel Whitmey
 John Trumbull
 Nicholas Silberg
 Monsieur Petit
 Catharine Samie
 Cook
 Lionel Robert
 Cook's Helper
 Stanislas Carre de Malberg
 Jean Rupert
 Surgeons
 Yvette Petit
 Dressmaker
 Paolo Mantini
 Hairdresser
 F. Van Den Driessche
 Humbert Balsan
 Nichel Rois
 Mutilated Officers
 Bob Sessions
 James Byrd
 Jeffrey Justin Ribier
 Mulato Boy
 Marc Tissot
 Construction Foreman
 Lambert Wilson
 Marquis de Lafayette
 Elsa Zylberstein
 Adina de Lafayette
 Jean-Pierre Aumont
 D'Hancarville
 Christopher Thompson
 Interpreter
 Jean-François Perrier
 Eric Genovese
 Bruno Putzulu
 Philippe Mareuil
 Philippe Bouclet
 Liberal Aristocrats
 Oliver Galfione
 Chevalier de Saint-Colombe
 Anthony Valentine
 British Ambassador

Steve Kalfa
 Dr Guillotin
 André Julien
 Jacques Herlin
 Savants
 Elizabeth Kaza
 Agathe de la Boulaye
 Card Players
 Abdel Bouthegmes
 Lafayette's Indian
 Michael Lonsdale
 Louis XVI
 Charlotte de Turckheim
 Marie Antoinette
 Damien Groelle
 The Dauphin
 Valerie Toldedano
 Madame Elizabeth
 Vernon Boltchev
 King's Translator
 Mathilde Vitry
 Catherine Chevalier
 Laure Killing
 Ladies of the Court
 Felix Malinbaum
 Captain of the Guard
 Hervé Hiole
 King's Messenger
 Christian Vurpillot
 Archbishop
 Philippe Girard
 Eric Berg
 Post Office Spies
 Nancy Marchand
 Abbesse
 Jessica Lloyd
 Julia
 Olivia Bonamy
 Sarah Mesguich
 Virginie Desarnault
 Schoolgirls
 Sylvia Laguna
 Nun
 Sandrine Piau
 Sophie Daneman
 Singers
 Denis Fouqueret
 Bishop
 Annie Didion
 Crazy Nurse

Silvia Berge
 Philippine Leroy-Beaulieu
 Martine Sarcey
 Céline Samie
 Jean-Marie Lhomme
 Luke Pontifell
 Scott Thrun
 Head and Heart Game
 Daniel Mesguich
 Mesmer
 Yan Duffas
 Thibault de Montalembert
 Assistants
 Magali Leiris
 Valentine Yarella
 Patients
 Gabrielle Islywyn
 Singer with Megaphone
 William Christie
 Conductor
 Jean-Paul Fouchecourt
 Dardanus
 Ismail Merchant
 Tipoo Sultan's
 Ambassador
 Martine Chevalier
 Mademoiselle Contat
 Valerie Lang
 Demented Woman
 Vincent Cassel
 Camille Desmoulins
 Jean Bautrema
 Shopkeeper
 Alban Thierry
 Alain Picard
 Jean-Marc Herve
 Puppeteers
 James Earl Jones
 Madison Hemings
 Beatrice Winde
 Mary Hemings
 Tim Choate
 Reporter

12.543 feet
 139 minutes

Dolby stereo
 In colour

ous social and professional engagements. Meanwhile, Jefferson gets word that one of his younger daughters has suddenly died in Monticello, the Virginian family home, and he summons his third daughter, Polly, to him. She arrives with her nurse, Sally, James' sister. Soon, just as James begins considering running away to be a free man in France, Sally and Jefferson begin a sexual liaison that results eventually in a pregnancy. Maria finds out through Patsy about Sally's late night visits to the ambassador's bedroom, and breaks off their attachment. As the French Revolution commences and Jefferson is summoned back to the States to be Washington's Secretary of State, he agrees to set free James, Sally and her children back in Monticello, upon his death. He does, and their mixed race progeny live on to tell the tale years later.

● Even its committed detractors must admit that the *maestoso* style machine of Merchant/Ivory has made their particular variety of literary costume drama seem effortless. And indeed, with *Jefferson in Paris*, they seem to apply very little effort. Coasting since long before *A Room with a View* on the cozy allure of bustles, mahogany interiors, garden idylls, Edwardian nostalgia and easily adaptable classic novels, Merchant/Ivory (and that includes busy scriptsmith Ruth Prawer Jhabvala) depend so blindly on their heritage details and decor in *Jefferson in Paris* that even the customary degree of grace and assurance has vanished from the formula.

At least the previous Ivory towers were superbly fashioned, however repetitive and quaint. In *Jefferson* there's not much that's convincing on any level - you never forget about the strangers sitting next to you in the theatre. The story, a potentially fascinating gallimaufry of history and speculation (it remains unproven that Jefferson sired children through his slaves), is diffuse and clubfooted. Fitfully, Jefferson courts a married woman, sleeps with a slave, makes and breaks devotional promises to his daughter, but we are given no idea why Jefferson does what he does, or how he

● On the eve of the French Revolution. Thomas Jefferson - 41, widowed and accompanied by his teenage daughter Patsy and his slave manservant James - comes to Paris as the American ambassador to France. Immersed in the richness of art, architecture and invention, Jefferson begins to court Maria Cosway, a free-spirited painter and society flirt whose marriage to the effete Richard Cosway in no way impairs her love life.

Their affair is restricted to exchanging love letters and beatitudes however, due to Jefferson's lingering feelings for his dead wife and for Patsy, who shares a rather intense intimacy with her father, and because of his vari-



The politics of the boudoir: Nick Nolte, Thandie Newton

feels about it. With Jhabvala's first original screenplay since the Ivory team hit it big adapting Henry James and E.M. Forster, *Jefferson* has the narrative energy of a wax museum and the insight of a primary school history text.

Decor and costuming are meticulous, as well they should be. Yet, although set and shot in France (including Versailles) and despite Jefferson's enthusiasm for architecture, the film's closely framed interiors and *jardin* strolls give us little sense of place – it could've been shot in Toronto. Nick Nolte, looking the part rather smartly, sleepwalks through a drastically underwritten role as if unaware that the entire film pivots on Jefferson's inner turmoil and romantic yearnings. Greta Scacchi as Maria tries in vain to show she's worthy of attention, and even the fiercely talented Gweneth Paltrow (playing Patsy) is wasted.

No amount of radical historical perspective would have improved *Jefferson in Paris* as a movie, but it might have at least raised a few scholarly and political hackles. As it is, the film's approach to history, politics and especially race relations is disappointingly blinkered. We only see the Parisian rabble as they run by, burning effigies. Perhaps intended to reflect aristocratic tunnelvision, the film's hermetic view of royal life unfortunately comes off as simply decadent. The blazingly apparent conundrum about Jefferson's character – that he was both a fervent Declaration of Independence-drafting democrat and a slave owner – is, come 1995, the central issue, and the filmmakers know it. Sally and James are therefore at the narrative core. Once there, however, they're given stock conflicts, while Jefferson, whose will and whim is the film's primary topos, remains virtually silent. James hankers for freedom, but he's portrayed as an ungrateful, headstrong drunk. Sally, obviously the more sensible of the two, wants to go back home to Monticello. It's as if the film thinks that it's doing the black characters a favour simply by giving them screen time. Only once is Jefferson pressed by a French statesman as to why negroes aren't included in the Jeffersonian "all men are created equal" definition of democracy, and Jhabvala gives Jefferson no comprehensible answer. The subject is never broached again, although audiences are forced to consider both it and why the film has gone silent on the matter, in every scene.

When Jefferson agrees to free Sally and her kin only after he has died, the film ponders the scene as if it's a moment of great historical import. He in fact died 37 years later; if it were Ivory's intention to reveal Jefferson as a hypocritical lout, there's plenty of ammunition, but the film still attends to the man as if he were a pillar of principle and wisdom. Jhabvala, Merchant and Ivory have devised the scenario to raise questions about Jefferson's legitimacy as a broker of ideals, they answer them by focusing on inane and bloodless romances.

Mike Atkinson

Killer

USA 1994

Director: Mark Malone

Certificate

18

Distributor

First Independent

Production Company

Keystone Films

In association with

Worldvision

Enterprises

Executive Producers

Robert Sigman

Gary Delfiner

Michael Strange

Producers

Robert Vince

William Vince

Associate Producers

Kelsey T. Howard

Abra Edelman

Production Co-ordinator

R. Marty Lewis

Production Manager

Laurie Hawes

Unit Production Manager

Greg Malcolm

Location Manager

Lorne Davidson

Post-production Supervisor

Kerry Uchida

Assistant Directors

Kelsey T. Howard

Sarah Rogers

Kent Pollon

Casting

Abra Edelman

Elisa Goodman

Marcia Shulman

Canada:

Katie Eland

Screenplay

Gordon Melbourne

Story

Mark Malone

Script Supervisor

Jean Christopher

Director of Photography

Tobias Schliessler

Editor

Robin Russell

Production Designer

Lynne Stopkewich

Art Director

Eric McNab

Set Decorator

Elizabeth Patrick

Set Dressers

Steph Watts

Geoff Hoare

Jason B. Landels

Special Effects Supervisor

Michael S. Vincent

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Al Benjamin

Costume Design

Maxyne Baker

Costume Supervisor

Margaret Lovenuik

Make-up

Pamela M. Athayde

Suzanne Willet

Hairstylist

Sanna Sappanen

Title Design

Johanna Weinstein

Titles

Judy Mah

Music/Orchestrations/

Music Producer

Graeme Coleman

Sound Supervisor

Kerry Uchida

Background Sound Editors

Richard Baumgartner

Issac "Skud" Strozberg

Dialogue Editor

Hubert Finklestien

Sound Mixer

David Husby

Music Recordist

Greg Reely

ADR Recordist

Kelly Cole

Foley Recordist

Bill Mellow

Ultra stereo

consultants:

Daniel W. Victor Jnr

Brian Slack

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Paul A. Sharpe

Bill "Otis" Sheppard

Dean Giammarco

Sound Effects Editor

Harry Morph

Foley Artists

Broadway Foley

Stunt Co-ordinator

Marc Akerstream

Cast

Anthony LaPaglia

Mick

Mimi Rogers

Fiona

Matt Craven

Archie

Peter Boyle

George

Monika Schnarre

Laura

Joseph Maher

Dr Albricht

Mark Acheson

Hellbig

Philip Hayes

FBI Agent

Christopher Mark Pinhey

Claudio de Victor

Partygoers

Justine Priestly

Masseuse

8,822 feet

98 minutes

Ultra stereo

In colour

US Title

Bullet Proof Heart



Kill me again: Mimi Rogers

another job. A woman downtown, Fiona, is in serious debt with the mob and they want her whacked, but there's a twist: she wants it to happen herself for medical reasons. George warns Mick to be careful because "men go soft around her".

Archie pleads with Mick for a second chance to prove himself. Mick finally concedes, but when they arrive at Fiona's apartment block, he makes Archie wait downstairs. At Fiona's swanky apartment, an art crowd party is beginning to wind down. Mick learns that Fiona is incurably ill. As the guests leave, he helps Fiona's drunk psychoanalyst Dr Albricht into the lift where he falls asleep. Fiona then seduces Mick. She ties him to her bed and slaps him hard. He finds the pain a welcome stimulation and has his first satisfying sex in several years. They leave and get into Mick's car with Archie.

While Mick is ringing George to question the necessity of the hit, Archie begins to describe to Fiona how he messed up the first attempt on Hellbig's life. This anecdote, shown in flashback, is told intermittently throughout the night. It ends with Archie unable to shoot Hellbig at the crucial moment. Meanwhile, Mick meets with George to explain his reluctance to kill Fiona, but George insists on him carrying through with it. Later, while walking through Idlewood cemetery, Fiona eludes Mick. He finds her lying inside a tomb, in extreme pain and apparently out of her mind. Leaving her in the car with Archie, Mick returns to her apartment block and interrogates Dr Albricht, who confirms that she is suffering from an incurable and painful disease that threatens her sanity.

Fiona returns to consciousness and she, Mick and Archie reach the appointed execution site, a warehouse in New Jersey, in the early hours. Mick seats Fiona in a chair with her back to the river but he can't bring himself to pull the trigger despite her weary pleading. George arrives and during a lengthy squabble between him and Mick outside, Archie comes to believe that Mick has left him alone with Fiona as a test. With her encouragement, Archie finally summons the will to shoot her through the head. As dawn

breaks, Mick sits on the riverbank cradling Fiona's limp body in his arms.

Debut director Mark Malone is a self-confessed, self-conscious resur-rector of film noir and *Killer* is steeped in admiration of its lowlife milieu and its central theme, the transcendent and fateful power of obsessive passion. His tragic plot's all-in-one-night structure, punctuated by Archie's recollections of his failed hit, and preceded by Mick's completion of the job, is realised with an assured sense of dramatic weight and timing, although it errs somewhat on the portentous side. The central idea of a victim who wants to die and a killer who has fallen for her and doesn't want to carry out his commission works well, although it's stretched almost to breaking point by the time Mimi Rogers' Fiona finally hits the deck. The film also looks as moody and bruised as a good noir should, with deeply etched shadows and muted colours.

Strangely though, all the care that Malone has taken with the film's look and in getting committed performances from his small ensemble cast seems to impede the film's dramatic flow. It's hard to tell whether this is because the attention to gesture and *mise en scène* is excessive to the point of mannerism, or because he and his male actors are so keen to let us know how well they're doing. Whatever the reason, its not just the men whose appearance seems to shout: "look at me, I'm the new Bobby De Niro"; the cars, the clothes, even the ice-cream cones seem to be saying, "Are you talking to me?".

An atmosphere of smug criminal camaraderie is to some extent an inevitable byproduct of Mick's impotent narcissism (Anthony La Paglia exudes a steely self-regard even after his bewildered character has supposedly "gone soft" on Fiona). But Matt Craven's jumpy, jerky wannabe Archie and Peter Boyle in the part that Peter Boyle always gets to play – the older and wiser wise guy, George – compound a feeling that everyone is practising their ad-libs before auditioning for Martin Scorsese's *Casino*. Malone's one serious weakness in his handling of *Killer* is that he allows the buzz his cast get from playing wise guys to show beyond the limits of their characters.

Fortunately, *Killer* has one central impeccable performance that never skips a beat. The part of Fiona gives Mimi Rogers a welcome break from playing so many walk-on mothers (in *Far From Home* and *Monkey Trouble* to name but two), and she proves with her best effort since *Someone to Watch Over Me* that she is perhaps the most sorely under-rated actress among many in Hollywood. Fiona's wild behaviour swings could so easily have been rendered in terms of a *Fatal Attraction*-style, monstrous, unknowable other. Instead, Rogers makes a poignant terrified victim out of a cipher-like role, and turns what could have been an extravagant exercise in wiseguy kitsch into an intriguing near-miss.

Nick James

Kiss of Death

USA 1994

Director: Barbet Schroeder

Certificate

18
Distributor
 20th Century Fox
Production Company
 20th Century Fox
Executive Producer
 Jack Baran
Producers
 Barbet Schroeder
 Susan Hoffman
Co-producer
 Richard Price
Associate Producer
 Chris Brigham
Production Co-ordinator
 Shell Hecht
Unit Production Manager
 Chris Brigham
Location Manager
 Scott Hornbacher
Post-production Supervisor
 Alexandra White
Assistant Directors
 Jack Baran
 Marlene Arvan
 David Venghaus Jr
Casting
 Paula Herold
Screenplay
 Richard Price
Story
 Eleazar Lipsky
 Based on the screenplay by Ben Hecht, Charles Lederer, for the 1947 film
Script Supervisor
 Cornelia "Nini" Rogan
Director of Photography
 Luciano Tovoli
Camera Operators
 Constantine Makris
 Ken Ferris
Steadicam Operators
 Larry McKonkey
 Bob Ulland
Opticals
 János Pilenyi
Editor
 Lee Percy
Production Designer
 Mel Bourne
Set Decorator
 Roberta J. Holinko
Set Dressers
 Daniel K. Grosso
 Chris Vogt
 Richard Nelson Jr
 William Durbin Jr
Scenic Artists
 Michael Zansky
 Stanley Pasay
Special Effects Co-ordinator
 Steve Kirshoff
Costume Design
 Theadora Van Runkle
Costume Supervisors
 Deidre Williams
 Lisa Frucht
Make-up
 Allen Weisinger
Special Make-up Effects
 Neal Martz
Hairstylist
 Joe Coscia
Title Design
 Robert Dawson
Titles
 Pacific Title
Music/Music Conductor
 Trevor Jones
Orchestrations
 Trevor Jones
 Geoffrey Alexander
 Julian Kershaw
Music Editor
 Bill Abbott
Music Co-ordinator
 Victoria Seale
Songs/Music Extracts
 "Black Jesus" by James Braddell, performed by 9 Lazy 9;
 "Salutations" by Eric Schrodty, Leon Dimant,
 "Jump Around" by Larry Muggerud, Eric

Schrodty, performed by House of Pain;
 "Fuk Dat" by Faustina Lenon, performed by Sagat; "Lush 3-2" by Paul Hartnoll, Phil Hartnoll, performed by Orbital; "I'm Open" by Giovanni Salah, performed by Lisa Lisa; "La Copa Rota" by Benito De Jesus, performed by Alci Acosta; "Back in My Life" by Joe Roberts, Nigel Lowis, performed by Joe Roberts; "Muchas gracias" by Thomas Kukulies, "Porque no unimos" by Thomas Kukulies, Roberto Herrador, performed by Salsa Picante; "Circle on You" by Emmanuelle Shoniwa, performed by Yo Yo Honey; "Feeling Free" by L. Rodriguez, S. Craden, performed by Liquid City; "Spaceman" by Tim O. Ian Housen, Jared Matt, Peter Weldon, Patrick Harte, performed by The Rosemarys; "Aperiance" by Oliver Bondzio, Ramon Zenker, performed by Hardfloor; "Hubba Bubba Baby" by John Morris, performed by Kinsui
Supervising Sound Editor
 Ron Bochar
Dialogue Editors
 Marissa Littlefield
 Fred Rosenberg
 Philip Stockton
ADR Supervisor
 Deborah Wallach
Foley Supervisor
 Bruce Pross
ADR Editor
 Gina R. Alfano
Foley Editors
 Frank Kern
 Kam Chan
 Steve Visscher
Sound Mixer
 Les Lazarowitz
Musicians
 John Whynot
 Simon Rhodes
ADR Mixer
 David Novak
Sound Re-recording Mixer
 Tom Fleischman
Foley Artist
 Marko Costanzo
Stunt Co-ordinator
 Mike Russo
Film Extracts
 The Driver (1978)
 The French Connection (1971)
Cast
 David Caruso
 Jimmy Kilmartin
 Samuel L. Jackson
 Calvin
 Nicolas Cage
 Little Junior
 Helen Hunt
 Bev
 Kathryn Erbe
 Rosie
 Stanley Tucci
 Frank Zoli
 Michael Rapaport
 Ronnie
 Ving Rhames
 Omar
 Philip Baker Hall
 Big Junior
 Anthony Heald
 Jack Gold

Angel David
 JJ.
 John Costelloe
 Cleary
 Lindsay J. Wrinn
 Megan L. Wrinn
 Corinna
 Katie Sagoma
 Corinna, age 4 years
 Anne Meara
 Bev's Mother
 Kevin Corrigan
 Kid Selling Infinity
 Hugh Palmer
 Naked Man Dancing
 Hope Davis
 Junior's Girlfriend
 Richard Price
 City Clerk
 Edward McDonald
 US Attorney
 Alex Stevens
 Convoy Drunk
 Mark Hammer
 Judge
 Joe Lisi
 Agent at Bungalow
 Frank Bileo
 Big Junior's Friend
 Jason Andrews
 Johnny A.
 Sean G. Wallace
 Bobby B.
 Ed Trucco
 Calvin's Partner
 Bernadette Penotti
 Molested Dancer
 Debra J. Pereira
 Sioux Dancer
 Shiek Mahmud-Bey
 Federal Agent
 John C. Vennema
 Angry Federal Agent

Tony Cucci
 Allen K. Bernstein
 Junior's Crew
 Dame
 Jose De Soto
 JJ.'s Crew
 Lloyd Hollar
 Prison Chaplain
 Nicholas Falcone
 Priest at Funeral
 James McCauley
 Cop Outside Bar
 Michael Artura
 Emergency Room Cop
 Tom Riis Farrell
 EMS Supervisor
 Juliet Adair Pritner
 Agent
 Henry Yuk
 Chinese Restaurant
 Owner
 Chuck Margiotta
 Jay Boryea
 Escorts at Cemetery
 Joseph Pentangelo
 Alan Jeffrey Gordon
 Riker's Security Officers
 Dean Rader-Duval
 Willie M. Watford
 Sing Sing Guards

9.954 feet
 101 minutes

Dolby stereo
 In colour
 Technicolor
 Prints by
 DeLuxe

Jimmy Kilmartin is a reformed car thief from Queens NY who is devoted to his wife, Bev, and baby daughter, Corrina. Jimmy's cousin Ronny begs him to come on a truck-stealing job in place of a drunk. Otherwise, he says, gangster Little Junior will kill him. Against his better instincts, Jimmy agrees. He finds the semi-conscious drunk in the truck cab and pushes him aside. When the police stop the truck convoy, Jimmy gives himself up, but the suddenly roused drunk shoots one of the arresting officers, Calvin. Jimmy takes the punishment for the cop's wounding, but he says nothing and begins his time in prison. Ronny promises Jimmy he will look after Bev, who has a drink problem. One night Ronny deliberately gets Bev drunk. When she wakes up at Ronny's apartment, she bolts into the street. Trying to drive Ronny's car away, she is killed in a collision. Jimmy offers the cops a deal in which they indict everyone, including Jimmy, for the robbery except Ronny. Incensed at being arrested, Little Junior assumes that Ronny is the snitch. Out on bail, he finds Ronny and he punches him to death.

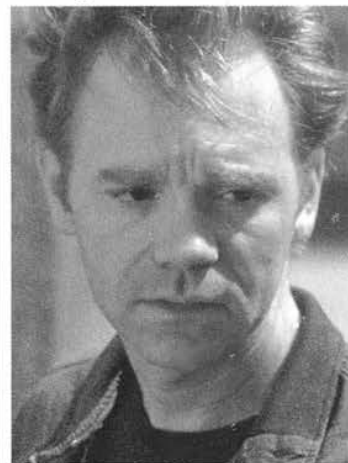
Jimmy gets out of prison and marries neighbour Rosie, but the District Attorney forces him to work for the cops, assigning Calvin as Jimmy's cop minder. Jimmy tries to buddy up with Little Junior at his club Baby Cakes while wearing a 'wire', getting rid of the device just in time before being searched. Little Junior then takes Jimmy to a meeting with black gang leader Omar. Jimmy performs well, and, at a second meeting, Little Junior uses Jimmy unwittingly as a decoy to divert Omar's attention while he shoots him. Jimmy has recorded the

killing but his expected reprieve is ruined when Omar turns out to have been an undercover FBI agent.

The FBI want Little Junior left alone as he is the key to a drugs network, but the police arrest him. Knowing that Jimmy is an informer. Little Junior has Corrina temporarily kidnapped, but she is later found unharmed. Meanwhile, the District Attorney has agreed to the FBI's offer to drop Little Junior's prosecution in return for a judge's post. Jimmy confronts Little Junior at Baby Cakes, causing a fight which leads to Calvin arresting Little Junior for assaulting a police officer. When the DA tries to have this arrest quashed, Jimmy plays him a recording he made when the DA admitted being bought off by the FBI. He threatens to send copies to the newspapers if Little Junior doesn't serve his time, or if Kilmartin or his family are ever bothered again.

Much of the history of the American crime film is in the fabric of *Kiss of Death*. As a remake of Henry Hathaway's 1947 film noir of the same name, it harks back to the gritty, cops-on-the-street strain of noirs that includes *The Asphalt Jungle*. Hathaway's film was also notorious for Richard Widmark's chilling portrayal of a sadistic killer, Tommy Udo, and, while little remains here of the original film's plot beyond its premise, there is an almost comic attempt from Nicolas Cage to match Widmark in inspired criminal lunacy. This involves Cage taking the more ludicrous aspects of his character Little Junior - his outrageously kitsch nightclub, his vivid sportswear, his pet acronym B.A.D. (Balls, Attitude, Direction) - very seriously indeed. As well as a noir pedigree there are also at least three sets of recognisable auteur fingerprints on the film, each, in their own way representing a different tradition.

Firstly, the plot's painstaking evocation of police and criminal procedures bears the page-thumbing researcher's digits of screenwriter Richard Price. Secondly, in the film's fetishistic juxtapositions of muscle and steel in motor shops, prisons and girlie bars, and in the high-camp flourishes of Little Junior's gangster lifestyle we have the unmistakably steely touch of director Barbet Schroeder. Thirdly, *Kiss of Death* bears Quentin Tarantino's influence.



Stony cockiness: David Caruso

Pulp Fiction has clearly had an impact on the way the film has been put together. The use of firearms to pack narrative shocks - for example when Omar is suddenly shot without warning - is post-*Pulp*, as is the knowing black humour and the casting of sexy actors as gangsters, particularly *Pulp*'s own Samuel L. Jackson and Ving Rhames.

The traditions that each of these influences represent are not usually found together in the same film. Richard Price's screenplays and novels such as *The Colour of Money*, *Sea of Love*, *Night and the City* and *Clockers* have a degree of realism which never allows imagination as substitute for an establishable fact or pattern of demotic speech. In *Kiss of Death*, Jimmy Kilmartin's miserable fate is weighed, quantified and dealt out with an attention to plausibility that Schroeder's overblown *mise-en-scène* often undermines. If Price's work is the logical extension of Hathaway's gumshoe perspective, then Schroeder's approach owes more to the designer flash of *Miami Vice*. This uneasy stylistic alliance is further complicated by the Tarantino influence. His fan worship of pulpy crime novels couldn't be further from Richard Price's addiction to the unfolding of real lives.

Kiss of Death might have benefited from the tension between these different moods if it had a more compelling central performance. On this evidence, David Caruso will not find the transition from the televisual fame he enjoyed as the morally-upright but quick-fisted cop in *NYPD Blue* to the role of a feature film leading man easy. As Jimmy Kilmartin, he is required to tone down his former intensity to a loser's baleful glow, kindling the slow-burning anger of a family man's protective instincts. Caruso's performance tries to imply deep emotional torment but he hasn't yet got the knack of being a blank screen onto which the audience can project their emotions. The stony cockiness he offers here is no substitute. Besides Kilmartin's character is often implausible. For example, given his supposed pride in and loyalty to his family, what are we to make of the ease with which he switches his affections to his babysitting neighbour after his first wife has been killed?

Kiss of Death has several scenes of agonising suspense - for example Kilmartin rocking his daughter on an exposed see-saw while surrounded by police protection officers peering at distant trees - but they are outnumbered by others of seemingly false significance that drag on interminably. Schroeder lacks the ability to marry the ponderously authentic exposition with such bitter comedic exchanges as Kilmartin's response to Little Junior's suggestion that he get an acronym of his own. "How about F.A.B. - Fucked At Birth". Like *Pulp Fiction*, *Kiss of Death* is self-aware of its historical place in the crime film genre, but it fails to carry its tradition lightly or, crucially, to imaginatively reinterpret what the crime film is capable of.

Nick James

Mad Dogs and Englishmen

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Henry Cole

Certificate

18

Distributor

Entertainment

Production Company

Movie Screen

Entertainment presents

A Moor Street Films

production

Executive Producer

Ashley Levett

Producers

Peter Watson-Wood

Nigel Thomas

Line Producer

Ronaldo Vasconcellos

Associate Producer

David Marlow

Production Associate

Clare Pickering

Production Co-ordinator

Martin Skegg

Location Manager

Lucien Thyne

Assistant Directors

Matthew Clark

Mike Day

Mark Fenn

Casting

London:

Ros Hubbard

John Hubbard

LA:

Barbara Clamen

Screenplay

Tim Sewell

Story

Henry Cole

Script Supervisor

Linda Gibson

Director of Photography

John Peters

Camera Operators

Paul Englefield

Underwater:

Sebastian Rich

Mark Silk

Steadicam Operator

Peter Robinson

Editors

Lionel Selwyn

Simon Hilton

Production Designer

Tony Stringer

Art Director

Sonja Klaus

Set Dresser

Mike Britton

Costume Design

Lisa Johnson

Make-up/Hairstylist

Trefor Proud

Tracy Lee

Titles/Opticals

General Screen

Enterprises

Music

Barrie Guard

Songs/Music Extracts

"Hersham Boys"

by Pursey/Parson,

performed by Sham 69;

"Hambone" by

Greg Ridley, Tim

Hinkley, Steve Marriot,

performed by Steve

Marriot; "5th Season"

by and performed

by Paul Weller;

"Crucify" by Richard

Warwick, "Bandaged

Knees" by Richard

Warwick, Del James,

performed by The

Almighty; "15 Ways"

by Mark E. Smith,

Craig Scanlon, Steven

Hanley, performed

by The Fall; Brother"

by P.A. Kinninola,

W. Small, performed

by Urban Species;

"Boomtown" by Angelo

Palladino, performed

by The Palladinos;

"Sweet Little Mystery"

by and performed

by John Martyn; "Need

Your Love So Bad"

by John Mertis,

performed by Gary

Moore; "Ave Maria"

by Charles Gounod;

"L'amerò, sarò costante

(Il re pastore) by

Wolfgang Amadeus

Mozart, performed

by Wiener Haydn-

Orchester, Lucia Popp

(soloist); "Salome: Eine

Menge Menschen Wird

sich Gegen Sie

Sammeln" by Richard

Strauss, performed

by The Wiener

Philharmoniker, Birgit

Nilsson (soloist)

Sound Editor

Brian Blamey

Dialogue Editor

Derek Holding

Sound Mixers

Michael "Golly" Russell

Peter Harmer

Matthew Maxwell

Stunt Co-ordinator

Glenn Marks

Cast

Elizabeth Hurley

Antonia Dyer

C. Thomas Howell

Mike Stone

Joss Ackland

Inspector Sam Stringer

Claire Bloom

Liz Stringer

Frederick Treves

Sir Harry Dyer

Andrew Connolly

Clive Nathan

Jeremy Brett

Tony Vernon-Smith

Louise Delamere

Sandy

Chris Adamson

Max Quinlan

Marcus Bentley

Photographer's

Assistant

Russ Cane

Flying Eye Reporter

Cheryl Doll

Young Antonia

Nicola Buffett

Diane

Alan "Fluff" Freeman

Disc Jockey

Paula Hamilton

Charlie

David Harewood

Jessop

Ian Henderson

Surveillance Detective

Kate Howard

Melissa Dyer

Howard Hughes

Newsreader

Daniel Jenkins

Glenn Marks

Junkies

Jason Lake

Natty

Patrick Lichfield

Himself

Julie Nicholson

Ad Agency Receptionist

Hugh Sachs

Brooks

Peter Stockbridge

Gent

Herbert Leslie Wright

Herbie

8,761 feet

97 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Technicolor

Antonia Dyer, daughter of wealthy Sir Harry, is a heroin user whose habit has worsened since her mother's suicide. Inspector Stringer, corrupt head of the Drugs Squad, also has problems: his wife Liz has walked out because of his attraction to Sandy, her daughter, explaining that Sandy is actually Stringer's daughter. After a drugs raid, Stringer's informer Natty is abducted, beaten and left to die by violent dealer Max Quinlan, another associate of Stringer's, giving Stringer a hold over Quinlan.

Mike, an American motorbike courier, asks Antonia on a date. Fired for drug use at work, Antonia leaves instead with upper class dealer Tony Vernon-Smith - Quinlan's boss. Quinlan tells Stringer that Sandy is sexually involved with Vernon-Smith. Mike tries again with Antonia and they become lovers; but she is more interested in exploiting him as her unwilling drug courier. Mike and Charlie - a designer hired by Sir Harry to refurbish Antonia's house - talk to her about her problem without success and Sir Harry decides to stop her allowance. Caught up in a police raid at Vernon-Smith's house, Mike decides he's had enough. Vernon-Smith is released uncharged; but Antonia demands the cheque back from the police, and Stringer connects her with his daughter's corruption.

Stringer tries to rape her. As she escapes an unseen attacker grabs her. When Mike finds her in hospital, she persuades him to help her escape to her father's country house. Mike leaves her there alone and seeks out Sir Harry.

The barrier between Sir Harry and Antonia starts to break down and her recovery begins, but Quinlan is out to kill her, and Inspector Nathan - a young colleague of Stringer's - is sent to protect her. Stringer tells Nathan the aim is to set a trap for Quinlan, but tells Quinlan he will be let off charges if he shoots Antonia. Stringer sets up a false rendezvous to keep Nathan out of the way but Antonia's premonition of danger enables Mike and Nathan to thwart the attempt. Stringer shoots the failed killers dead and seeks out Antonia himself. Finding Vernon-Smith at home watching porn videos of Sandy, Stringer shoots him dead - then he finds Sandy lying dead of an overdose by Vernon-Smith's pool. Mike and Antonia are reunited.

Mad Dogs and Englishmen's first shot shows a boy pogoing inside a small car while the suburban punk of Sham 69's "Hersham Boys" blasts from the radio. The camera swerves to reveal that the car is on the grassy terrace of a stately home, where the wealthy inhabitants are posing for a family portrait by Patrick Lichfield.

A decade and a half later, the adult Antonia - once the little girl in the photo - is seen cutting herself a line of white powder on top of the family snap. It's an opening that encapsulates both the strengths and flaws of this first feature by Henry Cole - himself a former heroin addict from a comfortable background.

What makes *Mad Dogs* unusual is the explicit parallels it draws between the malaise of junkiedom and that of class. Antonia's manipulative treatment of Mike is shown to be as equally rooted in unshakeable Sloane imperiousness as in junkie dependency. When he demands to know why she treats him "like a fucking messenger boy", she replies: "because that's what you are."

The film suggests that the complex food chain of smack dealers and complicit police is nourished by obsolete class allegiances. Drugs Squad chief Stringer complains about the influx of grammar-school boys into the force, while treating the vicious dealer Quinlan - an old army colleague - in a laissez faire manner. Big-fish dealer Vernon-Smith is an aristocrat who deals in smack not because he needs the money but out of sheer patrician venom: the royal family, dismissed as "fucking middle class", are a target of special contempt.

Unfortunately this provocative angle is wasted on a film whose execution doesn't match up to its concept. Tim Sewell's script wilts under the pressure of pop-psychological explanations for Antonia's addiction and Stringer's increasingly bizarre behaviour, resulting in a thriller that never convinces. Stringer is saddled with a particularly opaque subconscious: why would lust for Antonia lead him to blame her for his daughter's problem? The arbitrariness of his moral decay makes it hard to care. Most fatally, the touted reason for Antonia's addiction is laughably trite: "But I didn't think you loved me," she tells her father. "You were always too busy in the City doing deals."

Mad Dogs' main claim to authenticity - Cole's insider perspective on Sloane-dom and smack - is also the source of its inauthenticity. The film is too implicated in the privileged world it depicts to cast a critical eye on it, a point underscored by the flaunting of locations available only to a film-maker with the very best connections. It's significant that a release from class-bound repression can only be conceived in terms of an Anglo-American romance. Mike's main function in the film is to re-enact the same cultural cliché mined so lucratively by *Four Weddings and a Funeral* - namely that emotionally-stunted Brits need egalitarian Americans to sort them out.

The film's aristo-centric presumption that we will sympathise with the none-too-likeable Antonia isn't helped by the casting of Elizabeth Hurley. Her fame as Britain's most overexposed and underemployed actress makes the question of whether she can act impossible to answer; but she brings the right inflections and arrogance to the part. But Paula Hamilton - famous as the girl in the Volkswagen ad - is wonderfully brisk, tender and brittle as the put-upon interior designer Charlie. "You know, I really love this place," Charlie suddenly bursts out to the recuperating Antonia at the Dyer's country estate, before adding sadly: "But it's not enough, is it?"

Claire Monk

Rice People (Les Gens de la Rizière)

Cambodia/France 1994

Director: Rithy Panh

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Gala Films

Production Companies

JBA production/

Thelma Films/La Sept

Cinéma/ZDF/TSR

In association with

Canal +

Channel 4

La Direction du Cinéma

du Cambodge

Producer

Jacques Bidou

Associate Producer

Pierre-Alain Meier

Production Managers

Jérôme Kanapa

Chheng Daravuth

Kossol

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Catherine Forest

Assistant Directors

Alfred Lot

Catherine Dailleur

Casting

Chheng Savanna

Screenplay

Rithy Panh

Eve Deboise

Based on the novel

Ranjit Sepanjang

Jalan (Le Riz)

by Shannon Ahmad

Cambodian Dialogue

Adaptation

Khay Chance

Pich Tum Kravel

Rithy Panh

Script Supervisor

Loredana Cristelli

Director of Photography

Jacques Bouguin

Editors

Andrée Davanture

Marie-Christine

Rougerie

Set Design

Nhean Chamnaul

Special Effects

Georges Demetreau

Costume Design

Vuong Kyry

Make-up

Prisana Trachai

Music

Marc Marder

Music Performed by

Marc Marder

Catherine Cantin

Slim Pezin

Roland Pidoux

Bernard Yannotta

Traditional:

Orchestre du Théâtre

National

Musicians from the



Field of dreams: 'Rice People'

sets in, Yim Om has to take over the difficult fieldwork. Vong Poeuw advises her and his eldest daughter, Sokha, but his helplessness frustrates him, and his children become a burden. He tries to cut the thorn from his foot, but it doesn't help. Nor does the sympathetic medicine of a local doctor, and the hospital is too far away to be any use.

As his fever heightens he dreams of the Khmer Rouge sacking his village. Yim Om sees an owl, bird of sorrow, near the house. She fails to frighten it off. Vong Poeuw dies. Alone, Yim Om must now tend her children and her rice paddies. When the pressure becomes intolerable she goes to the local bar to get drunk with the men, behaviour that gets her labelled a shameless widow. An infestation of tiny crabs threatens the crop. Eventually Yim Om cracks.

One night she flees into the fields. The villagers track her down and, convinced that she is a threat to herself build a cage for her in her own hut. Now Sokha must take over but she fares no better: a plague of sparrows threatens the crop, and Yim Om is taken to the city to find a cure for her madness. When she returns, it's clear that she is no better, and she is put back in her cage. At last she is deemed well enough to return to the fields.

Most of the production money for *Rice People* came from European sources. The director, Rithy Panh, was born in Cambodia in 1964, but has lived in Europe since 1980. Marc Marder's music for the film derives from the European late-Romantic tradition, and works in the Western way of movie music, guiding if not shaping our responses. And Rithy Panh's cinematic style speaks a Western language, in which the close-up offers privileged access to a character's inner life, and a reflection in a broken mirror presages madness.

None of this amounts to a criticism of *Rice People*, a film which honourably and honestly embodies both Eastern and Western responses. It carries a dedication, "To my family 1975-1979": the dates are those of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge government, from which Rithy Panh was fortunate to escape with his

life in 1979. Yet it's a measure of the film's subtlety that it doesn't trade on the obvious horror of what the Khmer Rouge did to Cambodia.

Indeed, we can't even be sure when the action of *Rice People* takes place. It's certainly a modern Cambodia with buses, motorbikes, distant hospitals. Yet the peasants' lives have, we can assume, changed little for centuries. Nor do we know whether Vong Poeuw's dream of the Khmer Rouge reveals a memory, a premonition, or a terrible hallucination. Some might see that as an evasion, but the ambiguity should count as a positive strength.

Before he made *Rice People* (his first fiction film), Rithy Panh made two documentaries about his homeland, the second entitled *Souleymane Cissé* (1991) and known in English as *Cambodia Between War and Peace*. That state of being in-between - between continents, between cultures and between war and peace - is also at the heart of *Rice People*. We sense it most poignantly in the profoundly ambiguous, profoundly moving final images of Yim Om running in the fields, which provide only further uncertainties.

We've watched Yim Om's painful descent into madness, and the cruel practicality of the villagers' response. While her mother languishes in her cage, Sokha struggles to cope with the rice crop, she constructs scarecrows for the paddies, using her parents' clothes to give the sticks a semblance of life. As Yim Om, freed at last from the cage, capers through the fields, she seems as insubstantial as the scarecrow which wears her clothes. Is she escaping from madness, or plunging deeper into it? Can the rice paddies support her, or is the life they represent as much a cage as the one from which she has just emerged? And, as dreams will, the image of the Khmer Rouge returns to the viewer's mind (not to the screen): is that the future for Yim Om, to be brutalised in the name of freedom?

There can be no simple answers, and it's to Rithy Panh's credit that he doesn't attempt to provide any. *Rice People* is not a flawless film but, as I've suggested, it is honest and honourable: these days that must count as fairly high praise.

Nick Kimberley

Richie Rich

USA 1994

Director: Donald Petrie

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Warner Bros
Production Company
Silver Pictures
In association with
Davis Entertainment

Executive Producers

Jon Shapiro
Joe Bilella
Dan Kolsrud

Producers

Joel Silver
John Davis

Co-producers

Jacqueline George
Jeffrey A. Montgomery

Associate Producer

Wendy Wanderman

Production Associate

Lark Bernini

Production Manager

Richard H. Prince

Location Manager

Tom Busch

Assistant Directors

Geoffrey Hansen
Michael Samson
Douglas Ornstein
Bob Saunders

Casting

Margery Simkin
Chicago:

Jane Alderman

North Carolina:

Shirley Crumley

Chicago Associate:

Erica Arvold

Screenplay

Tom S. Parker

Jim Jannwein

Story

Neil Tolkin

Based on the

characters appearing

in Harvey Comics

Script Supervisor

Mary J. Carlson

Director of Photography

Don Burgess

Additional Photography

Peter James

Camera Operators

A:

Josh Bleibtreu

Dave Dunlap

B:

Jim Blandford

Visual Effects Supervisor

Peter Donen

Visual Effects Co-ordinator

Tom Boland

Visual Effects Photography

Bobby Byrne

Miniature Sequences

Grant McCune Design

Supervisor:

Grant McCune

Chief Model Maker:

Smokey Stover

Model Makers:

John Eaves

Ed Lawton

Pat Denver

Gil Draper

Sculptor:

Wayne Strong

Digital Film Services

Cinesite

Executive Producer:

Mitzi Gallagher

Digital Effects

Supervisor:

Brad Kuehn

Associate Producer:

Gil Gagnon

Composite Supervisor:

Thomas J. Smith

Digital Compositors:

Carol Ashley

Doug Tubach

Paint Supervisor:

Kevin Lingenfelter

Computer Generated Bee

In Sight Pix

Bee Animators

Theresa Ellis

Dale Baer

Digital Matte Paintings

Illusion Arts Inc

Graphics Displays

Video Image

Additional Visual Effects

Sight Effects

Animation

Jay Johnson

Editor

Malcolm Campbell

Production Designer

James Spencer

Art Director

William Matthews

Set Design

Cyndee Harris

Karen Fletcher Trujillo

Susan Wexler

Set Decorators

John Anderson

Patricia Malone

Illustrator

Dick Lasley

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Michael Wood

Special Effects

Foreman:

James Reedy

Brain Wood

David Wood

Gary Schadler

Costume Design

Lisa Jensen

Costume Supervisor

Keith G. Lewis

Key Make-up

Linda Melazzo

Key Hairstylist

Linda Rizzuto

Title Design

Kyle Cooper

Titles/Opticals/Animation

Pacific Title

Music

Alan Silvestri

Orchestrations

William Ross

Supervising Music Editor

Kenneth Karman

Music Editor

Andrew Silver

Songs/Music Extracts

"What I Like About

You" by Wally Palmer,

Jimmy Marinos, Mike

Skill, performed by

The Romantics;

"Claudia's Theme"

by Steve Tyrell, Guy

Moon; "Biker's Clothes"

by Steve Tyrell; "Side

By Side" by Harry

Woods; "Idomeneo"

by Wolfgang Amadeus

Mozart, performed

by Hungarian State

Opera Orchestra

Supervising Sound Editor

George Watters II

Sound Editors

R. J. Palmer

F. Hudson Miller

Howell Gibbins

Suhail Kafity

Midge Costin

Frank Howard

Supervising ADR Editor

Junio J. Ellis

Supervising Foley Editor

Victoria Martin

ADR Editors

Denise Horta

Stephen Janisz

Foley Editors

Matthew Harrison

James Likowski

Fred Burke

Sound Mixer

Scott Smith

ADR Mixer

Thomas J. O'Connell

Foley Mixer

Eric Gotthelf

Music Scoring Mixer

Dennis Sands

Re-recording Mixers

John Reitz

David Campbell

Greg Rudloff

Special Sound Effects

John Fasal

Frank Welker

Foley Artists

Kevin Bartnof

Catherine Rowe

Stunt Co-ordinator

Jack Gill

Film Extracts

North By Northwest (1959)

Cast

Macaulay Culkin

Richie Rich

John Larroquette

Van Dough

Edward Herrmann

Mr Rich

Christine Ebersole

Mrs Rich

Jonathan Hyde

Cadbury

Michael McShane

Professor Keenbean

Chelcie Ross

Ferguson

Mariangela Pino

Diane

Steph Lineburg

Gloria

Michael Maccarone

Tony

Joel Robinson

Omar

Jonathan Hilaro

Pee Wee

Reggie Jackson

Baseball Coach

Claudia Schiffer

Aerobics Instructor

Wanda Christine

Newswoman at Factory

Stacy Logan

Nash

Eddie Bo Smith Jr

Ambler

Kent Logsdon

Zullo

Bob Niley

President

David A. Fawcett

Chauffeur

Dawn Maxey

Van Dough's Secretary

Ben Stein

Teacher

Sean A. Tate

Reynolds

Joel Ellegant

Ellsworth

Justin Zaremby

Reginald

John Drury

Diann Burns

Newscastrs

Rush Pearson

Prison Lowlife

Rachel Stephens

Nydia Rodriguez

Richie's Secretaries

Sam Sanders

Detective

Mike Bacarella

Police Desk Sergeant

Marilyn Dadds Frank

financial acumen quickly makes him headline news.

Van Dough has Cadbury framed and arrested for the bombing and then, when Mr and Mrs Rich manage to re-establish contact with the outside world, gets to them first and holds them captive at the mansion. Richie, aided by eccentric inventor Professor Keenbean, springs Cadbury from jail and enlists the help of Gloria and the other kids in storming the mansion. Van Dough forces Mr and Mrs Rich to take him to their treasure vault inside a nearby hill which is carved, Mount Rushmore style, with huge effigies of their faces. Van Dough is disappointed to discover that the chamber contains only family trinkets and nothing of any financial value. After an involved struggle on the face of the mountain, Van Dough is subdued and then unceremoniously fired by Mr Rich. Richie entertains the other children at the mansion – at which Van Dough is now employed as a lowly gardener. His parents happily look on, pleased that their son now really is the richest boy in the world because he has friends.

Richie Rich is perversely reminiscent of the 1989 Michael Moore documentary *Roger and Me*. In *Roger and Me*, General Motors decided to close down their auto plant in Flint, Michigan and effectively destroyed the local economy. Here benevolent capitalist Mr Rich steps in to save the ailing United Tool Company and saves the local economy. If *Roger and Me* shows the ruthless reality of modern big business practice, then *Richie Rich* is its exact opposite, an unbearably coy fantasy of big business as it likes to think of itself in its advertising: as caring, responsible and people-oriented.

A film which wasn't so keen to peddle free enterprise propaganda might perhaps have had Mr Rich as an inventor whose patents had made him wealthy, or perhaps as a megarich movie or sports star. Presenting Rich

instead as a successful business tycoon is a much more dubious proposition, particularly for any luckless adults in the audience who've had recent experience of redundancy or 'downsizing'. It seems as if Horatio Alger is alive and well and writing scripts in Hollywood.

The blandness and meretriciousness of the storyline also means that *Richie Rich* does nothing to extend Macaulay Culkin's range as an actor. As a Culkin star vehicle, the film has a fair selection of the expected nifty gadgets and slapstick set pieces. The little 'robobee' flying robot and the *North by Northwest* inspired finale are presented with flair and the film's stock of witty one-liners is satisfyingly high. Unfortunately, the film-makers have shied away from any temptation to modify Culkin's pre-adolescent star persona even though he's now significantly taller and older-looking than he was in *My Girl* and *Home Alone 2*. Culkin is still playing a child rather than the young adolescent he obviously is. He remains stubbornly a figure teetering on the verge of responsibility; a character who defines himself principally in relation to his parents and to other grown-ups rather than in relation to his peers.

In the best of Culkin's earlier films, his trademark wide-eyed look served him well – because he so obviously was a talented child making comical headway in an adult's world. Here it seems unduly constricting, making him seem less of a star, more a passive spectator in his own story, a dull character whose unsubtle range of emotions only extends from a child's long face to a child's big smile. Increasingly, it's a persona which recalls the permanently bemused expression of Stan Laurel rather than a believable youngster. Macaulay Culkin's next role will be vital. If it's a safe, committee-approved family film such as this one, then his career will have stalled completely in a mire of tired slapstick and cosy platitudes.

Tom Tunney

Rob Roy

USA 1995

Dir: Michael Caton-Jones

Certificate
15

Distributor
UIP

Production Company

Talisman Production
For United Artists
Pictures
Developed with the
support of The Scottish
Film Production Fund
The European Script
Fund, an initiative of
the MEDIA Programme
of the European Union
British Screen
Finance Ltd
Executive Producer
Michael Caton-Jones

Producers

Peter Broughan
Richard Jackson

Co-producer

Larry DeWaay

Production Co-ordinator

Joyce Turner

Unit Manager

Paul Frift

Location Manager

Keith Hatcher

2nd Unit Director

Vic Armstrong

Assistant Directors

Bill Westley

Adam Goodman

Sean Clayton

Guy Heeley

John Withers

Casting

Susie Figgis

Screenplay

Alan Sharp

Script Supervisor

Anne Coulter

Director of Photography

Karl Walter Lindenlaub

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Jim Davis

Camera Operators

Mike Roberts

B:

Peter Cavaciuti

2nd Unit:

Malcolm Mackintosh

Editor

Peter Honess

Production Designer

Assheton Gorton

Art Directors

John Ralph

Alan Tomkins

Set Design

Lead:

Toad Tozer

Poppy Luard

Set Decorator

Ann Mollo

Storyboard Artist

Keith Crossley

Animal Prosthetics

John Humphries

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Ulrich Nefzer

Special Effects

Michael Luppino

Gerd Feuchter

Markus Geiger

Erno Bajus

Simon Baker

Costume Design

Sandy Powell

Costume Supervisor

Claire Spragge

Make-up Designer

Morag Ross

Make-up Artists

Dorothy Pearl

Miri Ben-Shlomo

Sallie Jaye

Hairstylists

Chief:

Jan Archibald

Toni-Ann Walker

Eithne Fennell

Barbara Taylor

Title Design

Ian Murray

Titles/Opticals

Howard Anderson
Company

Music

Carter Burwell

Music Performed by

Uilleann Pipes/
Low Whistle:

Davy Spillane

Music Conductors

Carter Burwell

Sonny Kompanek

Orchestrations

Sonny Kompanek

Music Editor

Adam Smalley

Dublin Music Consultant

Bill Whelan

Songs/Music Extracts

"Ailein Duinn",

"Morag's Lament",

traditional

arrangement by

Capercaillie, additional

arrangement by Carter

Burwell, performed

by Capercaillie, solo:

Karen Matheson;

"Blunt Reels",

"Gaelic Reels" by

and performed

by Capercaillie; "Green

Garters", "Nutmegs

and Ginger" traditional

arrangement by Lyle

Nordstrom, performed

by The Musicians

of Swanee Alley;

"Hard Earth" by and

performed by Carter

Burwell; "MacPherson's

Farewell" traditional

arrangements by

John Loesberg; "Mrs.

MacDonald of Dunach"

by Willie Lawrie,

performed by Angus

Grant, Karen Matheson;

"O'Sullivan's March"

by Michael Turbidity,

performed by The

Chieftains; "The High

Road To Linton"

(traditional), performed

by Charlie McKerron,

Marc Duff, Angus

Grant, Fred Morrison;

"Theid Mi Dhachgaigh"

(I'll Go Home)

(traditional), performed

by Angus Grant, Karen

Matheson; "Walter

Douglas MBE" by

P. M. Donald MacClead,

performed by Angus

Grant, Marc Duff,

Fred Morrison

Choreography

Gillian Barton

Supervising Sound Editor

Richard King

Dialogue Editors

Jim Matheny

Sukey Fontelleu

Supervising ADR Editor

Campbell Askew

ADR Editor

Cliff Latimer

Foley Editors

Mark Pappas

Don Sylvester

Nash Michael

Production Sound Recordist

David John

Music Recordist

Geoff Foster

ADR Mixers

Charlene Richards

Greg Steele

Kevin Tayler

David Novack

Scoring Mixer

Mike Farrow

DTS Consultant:

Jeff Levison

Re-recording Mixers

Chris Jenkins

Mark Smith

Adam Jenkins

Sound Effects Editors

Patricio A. Libenson

David F. Van Slyke

Sound Effects Recordist

Eric Potter

Foley Artists

Gary Hecker

Daniel O'Connell

Foley Mixers

Jimmy Ashwill

Nerses Gezalyan

Stunt Co-ordinator

Vic Armstrong

Armourers

Tony O'Connor

Dale Clarke

Animal Trainer

Dog:

Gilly Raddings

Horse Master

Wendy Armstrong

Head Groom

Bruce Armstrong

Cast

Liam Neeson

Rob Roy

Jessica Lange

Mary

John Hurt

Montrose

Tim Roth

Cunningham

Eric Stoltz

McDonald

Andrew Keir

Argyll

Brian Cox

Killearn

Brian McCordie

Alasdair

Gilbert Martin

Guthrie

Vicki Masson

Betty

Gilly Gilchrist

Iain

Jason Fleming

Gregor

Ewan Stewart

Coll

David Hayman

Sibbald

Brian McArthur

Ranald

David Palmer

Duncan

Myra McFadyen

Tinker Woman

Karen Matheson

Ceildh Singer

Shirley Henderson

Morag

John Martagh

Referee

Bill Gardiner

Tavern Lad

Valentine Nwanze

Servant Boy

Richard Bonehill

Guthrie's Opponent

12,499 feet

139 minutes

DTS stereo

In colour

Deluxe

Anamorphic

Scotland, 1713. Robert Roy McGregor, leader of his highland clan, applies to the Marquis of Montrose for the loan of £1,000 to invest in cattle. Killearn, Montrose's factor schemes with Archibald Cunningham, the Marquis's English houseguest, to give the sum to Rob's friend McDonald in cash. Cunningham murders and robs McDonald, and Killearn spreads the story that McDonald has absconded to the Americas. Montrose offers to forget the loan, which is secured with the McGregor lands, if Rob testifies that the Duke of Argyll, the Marquis' rival, is a Jacobite.

Rob, a man of iron integrity, refuses and turns outlaw. While Rob is away, Cunningham raids his home and rapes his wife Mary. Rob and Alasdair kidnap Killearn, hoping the testimony of Betty, a maid impregnated by Cunningham who has overheard the scheme, will make him confess. But Betty hangs herself and Killearn taunts Mary, who is pregnant but does not know whether by Roy or Cunningham and has not told her husband about the rape, into stabbing him. Alasdair completes the murder and later shoots at redcoats raiding the McGregor lands, starting a skirmish in which he is fatally wounded by return fire.

As he dies, he tells Rob about the rape. Rob is captured by Cunningham and condemned to be hanged by Montrose, but escapes and seeks refuge with Argyll, who has been told by Mary of Montrose's plot against him and of Rob's refusal to bear false witness. Through Argyll, Rob petitions Montrose for a duel with Cunningham. Argyll forces a wager on Montrose whereby Rob's debt will be discharged if he bests Cunningham. The duel goes badly for Rob, but at the last he kills</



Tartan hero: Liam Neeson as Rob Roy

◀ Cunningham and is reunited with his clan.

Walter Scott has – a few versions of *Ivanhoe* apart – been neglected by the movies, perhaps because a closer look at his action-packed narratives reveals he was less interested in adventure than in tragedy, which has never played well in Peoria.

Rob Roy opens with a historical note about the breakdown of the clan system that has allowed for the benevolent influence of such men as Robert Roy McGregor, and some waffle about how it is possible to find honour in defeat, establishing that this is a tale of noble, bare-legged Indians displaced by corrupt colonists. It is a neat irony that the benchmark for such large scale historical adventures as this is Michael Mann's film of *The Last of the Mohicans*, which gives Scott the unsteady position of following a box office trail blazed by his imitator, James Fenimore Cooper.

There is a disjointedness about this largely entertaining and enjoyable picture. Michael Caton-Jones, who has been making half-way decent films from mostly promising material, stages astonishing moments, such as the appearance of two boatloads of rapacious redcoats out of the early morning mist or an escaping Rob's momentary concealment inside the rotten carcass of a dead cow. But he films the climactic duel as if it were a televised snooker match and all the confrontations between Liam Neeson's vigorous Rob and sundry hairier villains play like ninth-generation carbons of Sergio Leone stand-offs.

The Western element runs throughout the film: Eric Stoltz ponders emigration to the Americas, while Killcarn compares the highlanders to Native Americans. This is the first notable credit in some years for the Scots writer Alan Sharp, who wrote two of the great screenplays of the 70s, Robert Aldrich's *Ulzana's Raid* and Arthur Penn's *Night Moves*, both of which focused on less clear-cut heroic figures than Rob Roy and were tragedies rather than adventures. Neeson is so stiff a goodie that he can never follow the savage path of Ulzana, though the plot puts him in exactly the same position. Therefore, the script has to be cluttered with sub-

plots, secondary baddies and circumstances to turn Rob into an outlaw. There is a briefly entertained suggestion that Rob's pride in his own integrity has brought his misfortunes upon him, but any action or motive that might make him flawed (or even interesting) is displaced onto stooges like the luckless Alasdair and the cheery McDonald.

Caton-Jones and Sharp are required to spend most of the time on Rob and Mary, affording Neeson a shot at being a genuine Hollywood hero and allowing Jessica Lange's presence to be asserted in scenes of domestic struggle and suffering. However, as with so many swashbucklers, all the interest is with the villains. *Rob Roy* constantly redeems itself by the quality of its perfidy: Tim Roth's Cunningham is a startling creation, pitched somewhere between Pee Wee Herman, Marius Goring in *A Matter of Life and Death* and Rupert of Hentzau, mincing through sword fights and making the most of acid lines and pained expressions; Brian Cox's Killcarn is a masterful sniveller, piously hypocritical and the real brains of the villainy, and oddly one of the few authentically Scottish voices on the soundtrack; and John Hurt's Montrose, revealed to be the bastard Cunningham's probable father as he retrieves a cameo of the villain's mother from his dead body, is an effete and callous aristocratic swine, despairing of the untidiness of human contact as he tends his perfect garden.

Though their heroes never compete with their villains, Caton-Jones and Sharp offer enough pleasures between the history lessons and the Scott-scuttling to make this worthwhile. Few films in recent memory have dwelled to such an extent on the Scots pursuit of sheep-shagging, referred to in seemingly every exchange of insults between Englishman and Scot, lowlander and highlander. The most extraordinary moment, which even seems to appal Cunningham, comes after the raping and pillaging, as Mary washes herself and Alasdair, arriving too late, wades into the waters after the departing raiders, only for the redcoats to respond to his cries of 'English Bastards' with a mocking chorus of baaing.

Kim Newman

The Sexual Life of the Belgians 1950-1978 (La Vie Sexuelle des Belges 1950-1978)

Belgium 1994

Director: Jan Bucquoy

Certificate

18

Distributor

Metro Tartan

Production Company

Transatlantic Films

Producer

Jan Bucquoy

Associate Producer

Francis De Smet

Production Manager

Françoise Hoste

Assistant Directors

Philippe Van Damme

Valérie Jacquemin

Screenplay

Jan Bucquoy

Continuity

Valérie Weyer

Director of Photography

Michel Baudour

Editor

Matyas Veress

Production Designers

Nathalie André

Nicole Lenoir

Storyboard Artists

Jean-Philippe Vidon

Jan Bucquoy

Wardrobe

Sabina Kumeling

Marianne Rose

Mariska Clerebaut

Make-up

Mika Joniaux

Music

Francis De Smet

Songs/Music Extracts

"Ik Ben Zo Eenzaam

Zander Jou" performed

by Will Tura; "Katy"

performed by Marc

Aryan; "I Am Going

Home" performed

by Gene Vincent,

Bob Bain; "Sometimes

Your Sad" performed

by The Dominoes;

"Requiem" by Peter

Benoit; "Hymne

National Russe"

performed by Ensemble

Choral de Haralbeke;

"Reve D'Amour" by

Franz Liszt, piano

performed by Laora

Gulaz; "Valse Lente"

by Francis De Smet,

accordion performed

by Claudine Goche,

keyboards performed

by Francis De Smet;

"Dolle Mol Blues",

"Cecilia Rock", "Hard

Blues" performed

by Country Blues

Rock Bank of Flanders

conducted by

Francis De Smet

Sound

Jean-Grégoire

Mekhtarian

Sound Editor

Matyas Veress

Sound Mixer

Laora Bardos

Gerard Rousseau

Sound Re-recorders

Gerard Rousseau

Sound Effects

Marie Jeanne

Wijckmans

Film Extracts

Johnny Guitar 1954

Cast

Jean-Henri Compère

Jan Bucquoy

Noé Francq

Jan as a child

Isabelle Legros

Noella Bucquoy

Sophie Schneider

Thérèse

Pascala Binneri

Ariane Bucquoy

Michele Shor

Aunt Martha

Dorothee Capelluto

Mia

Jacques Druaux

Father

Sacha Jacques

Bucquoy baby

Boris Bucquoy

Bucquoy, aged 2

Pascal Binnert

The Sister

Michel Angely

Greengrocer

Michele Shor

Aunt Martha

Stefan Lernous

Eddy

Georgette Stulens

Eddy's Mother

Raymond Vandersmissen

Eddy's Father

Tegan Pick

Girl in chenille

Kathleen Joye

'Sale culotte'

Sébastien Demone

Le Rouquin as a child

Les Dominos

Orchestra

Valérie Van Nissen

Sale culotte as an adult

Alain Eloy

Le Rouquin as an adult

Roberto Buscemi

Pirana

Moreno Boriani

Moretti

Graziela Calahreze

Madame Lejeune

Dorothee Capelluto

Mia

Laura Dupont

Mia's Mother

Eric Ba Costa

Mia's Father

Jan Bucquoy

Poete dada

Andreas

Kristien Pottie

Greta

Jacques Lefebvre

Herman J. C. Claeys

Anne-Marie Polster

Esther

Monique Cromers

Mere Thérèse

Claudine Maton

Cathy

Maria-Louisa Genova

X

Atlantis Van Ardoewaan

Barman

Marie-Jo Delhaye

Cécile

Sabrina Leurquin

Adjani

Renaldo Deman

Toni

Herman Brusselmans

Brusselmans

Tiphaine Henrion

Bucquoy's Daughter

Morgan Marinne

Bucquoy's Son

Maryline Darimont

Ulrique

Julie Bougard

Dancer

Agatha Cornez

Daisy

Jennifer

Sadomasochist

Marlene Dueltz

Marlene

Noël Codin

Pierre Merlens

Véronique Antonutti

Sarah

Laure Pointeau

Ange

Claire Dulin

Billy Vandermeersch

Richard Sportich Tino

Serge Cromers

Alain Roch

Mariska Clerebaut

Léopoldo Bortolami

Jan Van Riet

Ludwig Van Riet

The Clients at 'Wandering'

Les Chires de Walderen

Jeanne Keuterickx

Muriel De Grave

Jean-Jacques Eustacchio

Arlotte Verstappen

Martine Mascagni

Elisabeth De Wilderde

Marie-Rose Meert

Anne-Mie Yaasen

Jef Meert

Nathalie Andre

Fred Meert

Joachim Romero

Gwanoël Press

Cécile Ringlet

Caïlle Firenze

Serge Delfosse

Simone Troch

Patricia Gersi

Jean-Michel Vandeneere

Vicky

Francis De Smet

Eric Zoll

Gilles Henin

Marie France Debongnie

Agnès De Pourbais

Bernard Slingeneijer de

Goes

Imad Safar

Isabelle Devreux

Sébastien Hill-Derive

Virginie Hill-Derive

Pierre Paul Berycke

Joseph Manzo

Sylvain Dumont

Mine

Marie-Pierre

Esthella Karagevrekis

7,507 feet

63 minutes

In colour

Subtitles

Belgium. The late 1940s. Flemish infant Jan Bucquoy feels the first stirrings of sexual arousal at his mother's breast. Since his mother is a parsimonious scold and his father an uncommunicative drinker who dies while he is still a boy, Jan grows up materially and emotionally impoverished. His first sexual experience is with an older adolescent boy in a seaside caravan, though later he prefers female sexual partners.

At school he defends a pretty girl from the cruel teasing of a mob. A tentative romance develops between them, but the relationship is never consummated. A very liberated aunt helps Jan to formally lose his virginity. Beyond this, Jan's family life presents few alternatives to a lifetime of oppression. Work as a clerk in his father's old firm is not to his taste. Only a literature course studying Henry Miller and similar writers – and the attractive female teacher who teaches them – seems to offer any hope of sensual escape.

Jan's quest for excitement carries him to Brussels at the height of the political and sexual ferment of the late



Rubbery allure: Jan Bucquoy

60s. There he scales new heights of carnal gratification – courtesy of a barmaid who teaches him postures from the *Karma Sutra* – but his attempts to write a great novel are consistently frustrated by the distractions of bed and bar. He fathers two children, but fails to come to terms with the demands of fatherhood, and his short-lived marriage to their mother ends in rancour. Finally alone and free from responsibility, he is still unable to concentrate his mind, and succumbs to the rubbery allure of an inflatable woman.

Anyone enticed into the cinema by the broad sociological sweep of this film's title is going to be seriously disappointed. A far more appropriate label for veteran Flemish anarchist Jan Bucquoy's accomplished but depressing debut feature would have been *The Sexual Life of One Belgian*, but titular accuracy might have limited this defiantly unsubsidised production's popular appeal. The one Belgian we are dealing with here is not just any old random low-countryman, but Jan Bucquoy himself – scurrilous debunker of such key Belgian cultural icons as Hergé, the inventor of *Tintin* and King Baudouin, and (as viewers of *Eurotrash* are all-too-painfully aware) curator of the National Museum of Underpants.

If Bucquoy's sexual history is representative of his fellow countrypeople's, those who have sought love and hard to find a nation whose amorous life is more grimly constricted than our own may well rejoice at this portrayal of love Belgian-style. The overall tone of this dry autobiographical fragment (detailing only its author's first 28 years and being notionally the first part of a trilogy) is one of sardonic disillusionment. Bucquoy's idea of sexual liberation is firmly rooted – and I use the term advisedly – in 60s phallocentricity, but he appears to derive little joy from his intermittent conquests. The only engaging female character in the film is his mother, who becomes more appealing the more she abuses him.

It is much to the credit of Jean-Henri Compère that he manages to imbue a profoundly unappealing lead role with a degree of rumpled charm. There are some nice comic touches too, such as Jan's tendency to contextualise the key events of his life in terms of the winds ("a lithe breeze from Scandinavia") that usher them in. The narration is at its best when threatening to break down into a succession of gnomish non-sequiturs – "There are three kinds of pigeons: those that win races, those we cook, and my dad's that fly away and don't come back". In the end though the emotional mood is too closely allied to the sombre greys and browns of the cinematographer's palette. If Bucquoy truly believes manhood to be "an illusion", he seems to have no interest in being demystified. The nearest this film gets to a psychosexual insight into the relations between men and women is the pub philosopher's hardy perennial – can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em.

Ben Thompson

Silent Fall

USA 1994

Director: Bruce Beresford

Certificate

15

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Morgan Creek

Productions

Executive Producer

Gary Barber

Producer

James G. Robinson

Co-producers

Penelope L. Foster

Jim Kouf

Lynn Bigelow

Production Supervisor

Todd P. Smith

Supervising Production

Co-ordinator

Louise Rosner

Production Co-ordinator

Susan McNamara

Unit Production Manager

Penelope L. Foster

Location Managers

Baltimore:

James Gierman

Easton:

Linda Heyman

Post-production Supervisor

Jody Levin

Assistant Directors

Katterli A. Frauenfelder

Michele 'Shelley' Ziegler

Casting

Shari Rhodes

Joseph Middleton

Baltimore:

Benita Hofstetter

Easton:

Chata Smith

Screenplay

Akiva Goldsman

Script Supervisor

Larry Johnson

Director of Photography

Peter James

Camera Operators

Erich Roland

B:

Bruce MacCallum

Special Visual Effects

Introvision

International Ltd

Supervisor:

John Mesa

Editor

Ian Crafford

Associate Editor

Lee Grubin

Production Designer

John Stoddart

Art Director

David Bomba

Set Decorator

Patty Malone

Set Dressers

Liz Weber

Tom Scruggs

Dale Davis

Elizabeth Bell

Costume Design

Colleen Kelsall

Wardrobe Supervisor

David Davenport

Make-up Artists

Key:

Kathryn Bihl

Cheryl Kinion

Hairstylists

Peggy Nicholson

Ardis Cohen

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Music

Stewart Copeland

Music Conductor /

Music Arrangements

Michael Andreas

Music Editor

Michael Dittrock

Music Extract

"Piano Concerto No. 21

in C Major K467 "Elvira

Madigan" by Wolfgang

Amadeus Mozart,

performed by the

New Philharmonic

Orchestra of St

Petersburg, piano:

Sergei Uravayev

Supervising Sound Editor

Donald J. Malouf

Supervising ADR Editor

Thomas G. Whiting

ADR Editor

Gail Clark

Sound Mixer

Chris Newman

ADR Mixer

Christine Tucker

Foley Mixer

Mary Jo Lang

Re-recording Mixers

Chris Carpenter

D. M. Hemphill

Bill W. Benton

Sound Effects Editors

Jeff Clark

Nils C. Jensen

Kerry Dean Williams

Ron Eng

Foley Artists

Marilyn Graf

John Roesch

Hilda Hodges

Kevin Bartnof

Technical Adviser

Mark S. Komrad

Stunt Co-ordinator

Randy Fife

Cast

Richard Dreyfuss

Jake Rainer

Linda Hamilton

Karen Rainer

John Lithgow

Doctor Harlinger

J. T. Walsh

Sheriff Mitch Rivers

Ben Faulkner

Tim Warden

Liv Tyler

Sylvie Warden

Zahn McClannon

Deputy Bear

Brandon Stouffer

Treva Monik King

Halloween Kids

John McGee Jr

Deputy

Ron Tucker

Forensic Detective

Catherine Shaffner

Martha

Heather M. Bomba

Marianne M. Bomba

Twins

Jane Beard

Carol Simmons

Mary Kate Law

Hostess

Helen Hedman

Mitch Rivers' Wife

Steven Burnette

Mitch Rivers' Son

Sean Baldwin

Halloween Monster

9.070 feet

101 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Duart

Prints by

Technicolor



Unspoken ties: Faulkner, Tyler

calm Tim Warden, an autistic nine-year-old found wielding a kitchen knife at the scene of the murder of his parents. Rainer is reluctant to get involved, but Tim's 18-year-old sister Sylvie, who also witnessed the murder but claims to remember nothing, persuades him to help Tim in order to prevent the boy falling into the hands of a less sensitive psychiatrist, Dr Harlinger, who wants to pump him full of drugs. Tim refuses to speak, but he responds to the card games with which Rainer tries to break through to him. And after Sylvie reveals Tim's talent for mimicry, Rainer induces the boy to repeat the words he overheard during the murder. Tim becomes a suspect himself, however, when Dr Harlinger shows that, under hypnosis, the boy would be capable of the strength necessary to inflict the knife wounds found on his parents' bodies, while Rivers discovers pornographic photos of Tim taken by his father, supplying a motive. Rivers gives Rainer one more day to unravel the mystery before he arrests Tim.

Sylvie, after failing to seduce Rainer, invites him to dinner at her parents' house, drugs him and dumps him in a frozen lake. Looking on, Tim rings Sylvie and imitates Sheriff Rivers, asking her to come to the police station; when she has gone, he saves Rainer before he drowns. Using a jack, two queens and a king from a pack of cards to represent the members of his family, Tim re-enacts the murder for Rainer, showing that Sylvie is the killer. Returning from the police station, where she steals Sheriff Rivers' gun, Sylvie confesses to Rainer that she murdered her parents when she caught her father abusing Tim, the same way he had abused her. She is about to shoot Rainer when Tim stops her, speaking for the first time in his own voice. "One year later", Tim is living happily with Rainer and his wife, while Sylvie is being treated in hospital.

In what must be a deliberate nod to John Carpenter's *Halloween*, the opening scenes of *Silent Fall* take place at Halloween, with a little boy suspected of butchering members of his own family after catching them in *flagrante*. Tim, the film seems to be suggesting, could have grown up to be Michael Myers (the *Halloween* killer) if he hadn't had the good fortune to fall into the hands of a sympathetic child

psychiatrist like Dr Rainer. In the hands of Donald Pleasence's Dr Loomis, who in *Halloween* refers to his patient simply as "The Evil", or here John Lithgow's Dr Harlinger, who hopes to unlock the boy's secret with the malevolent movie shrink's favourite devices (a truth serum and hypnosis), it could have been otherwise.

Halloween isn't the only point of reference here. In fact, the pitch is rather easy to reconstruct: *Rain Man* meets *Witness*, with a hint of child abuse thrown in for topicality. That doesn't mean the script is entirely by numbers. To his credit, writer Akiva Goldsman (the son, the press notes inform us, of "two prominent child psychiatrists who ran a centre for autistic children") makes Tim's autism fundamental to the solution of the mystery. The idea that Rainer can discover, via Tim's talent for mimicry, what was said at the time of the murder, without being sure which character spoke which line, is a fascinating screenwriter's conceit. Equally Rainer's assertion that autistics respond to anything that's in sequence, like playing cards, and his use of card tricks to break through Tim's barrier of silence, pay off ingeniously when Tim acts out the murder using the Jack, Queen, King of Hearts (for himself and his parents) and the Queen of Diamonds (for Sylvie). That said, the way we learn the relevant psychological background information, through a convenient discussion about the nature of autism between Rainer and Sylvie, is ham fisted. Furthermore, a major implausibility breaks the logic when, having established that Tim can only repeat phrases he has overheard, the plot requires him to improvise in the voice of Sheriff Rivers in order to lure Sylvie away from the house.

Given the script's rich possibilities, *Silent Fall* could clearly have been a much better film; that it turned out quite so bland can only be blamed on the director, Bruce Beresford. After his last four films, all upmarket literary adaptations, conspicuously failed to match the success of *Driving Miss Daisy*, Beresford was perhaps looking for a safe commercial bet. But that doesn't explain why such a versatile director should have made something so utterly lacking in character, atmosphere or suspense. Of Beresford's 19 films to date, perhaps only *Her Alibi*, his previous shot at a crowd-pleasing Hollywood thriller, is weaker, which suggests that he's simply not cut out for the genre. Another former Oscar-winner badly in need of a hit, Richard Dreyfuss seems similarly uninspired here. In fact the most convincing performance comes from nine-year-old Ben Faulkner – although even a vastly more experienced actor would have had trouble making Tim's climactic plea for Rainer's life anything but ludicrous. As for Linda Hamilton, the fact that the thankless Mrs Rainer is her first film role since *Terminator 2* is yet another indictment of Hollywood's continuing failure to find a use for women actors over the age of 35.

John Wrathall

Sin compasión (Sans pitié)

Peru/Mexico/France 1994

Director: Francisco J. Lombardi

Certificate
15
Distributor
Gala Films
Production Company
Inca Films y producciones Amaranta
In association with Fundacion del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano
CIBy 2000
Executive Producer
Gustavo Sanchez
Producer
Francisco J. Lombardi
Production Co-ordinator
Cecilia Maric
Production Manager
Oscar del Rio
Assistant Directors
Enrique Moncloa
Bernardo Caceres
Casting
Monica Dominguez
Screenplay
Augusto Cabada
Based on the novel *Crime and Punishment* by F. Dostoevsky
Script Supervisor
Dennise Arregui
Director of Photography
Pili Flores Guerra
Camera Operator
Micaela Cajahuaringa
Editor
Luis Barrios
Art Director
Cecilia Montiel
Make-up
Sonia Uriarte
Music Director
Leopoldo La Rosa
Music performed by
Violins:
Fabian Silva
Juan Gonzales
Boris del Rio
Hector Cortes
Hernan Valdivia
Percy Valdivia
Viola:
Juan Meneses
Violoncello:
Miguel Reyna
Contrabass:
Enrique Ormeno
Flute:
Cesar Vivanco
Cornet:
Rosina Aznarán
Trumpet:
Hugo Alvites
Percussion:
Luis Beteta
Music Editor
Daniel Padilla
Music Extract

"Tema", "Death of Aase" (from "Peer Gynt" suite part 1) by Edvard Grieg, performed by Orquesta Sinfonica Nacional
Sound Design/Sound Editor
Daniel Padilla
Sound Mixer
Rauno J. Kirves
Foley Artist
Jorge Tapia

Cast
Diego Bertie
Ramón Romano
Adriana Davila
Sonia Martinez
Jorge Chiarella
Mayor Portillo
Marcello Rivera
Julian Razuri
Ricardo Fernandez
Leandro Martinez
Carlos Osetto
Priest
Hernán Romero
Alejandro Velaochaga
Mariella Trejos
Senora Aliaga
José María Salcedo
Professor
Augusto Modenesi
Senor Aliaga
Humberto Modenesi
Senor Aliaga
Juan José Criados
Nico
Isabel Solari
Paula
Monica Dominguez
Journalist
Ruth Escudero
Jueza
Marcial Mattheus
Doctor
Benjamin Sevilla
Jabali
Oscar Orellana
Photographer
Mario Velasquez
Policeman
Chipi Proano
Investigator
Ximena Casanova
Tobacconist
Daniel Estrada
Señor de Velorio
Elsi Stollari
Vecina de Ramón

10,820 feet
120 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
DuArt
Subtitles



Punishment's pistol: Adriana Davila

girl from the family, Sonia, out late at night – it is clear she has taken to prostitution. They talk, she is grateful for his help during the eviction, he disapproves of what she has become. Full of anger and indignation at the injustice he sees all around, Ramon hatches a plot to gain his revenge against his landlords. He goes to visit his landlady and pretends he has come to pay his rent. She lets him in, and as she turns round he strikes her fatally. As he tries to drag the body away, the landlady's husband suddenly appears. Ramon is forced to kill him, too. He escapes with some money.

Ramon is sure he will be suspected by the police, and as a result starts to behave in a guilty way. He is asked to visit the police station, and reacts so touchily to their questions that the head of the investigation, Mayor Portillo, begins to suspect him. Sonia, who has struck up a friendship with Ramon, is also seeing Velaochaga, a wealthy 60-year-old who is obsessed by "child-women". Ramon tracks him down and the old man explains his desires over a coffee. Ramon is once again morally outraged. In the meantime, Portillo is gathering evidence which points towards Ramon's guilt.

Sonia is summoned to Velaochaga's house. For once, she stands up to him, and as they wrestle, she shoots him dead. When she meets Ramon again, he confesses to her and she convinces him that he has to give himself up for the two of them to have a future together. Ramon does so, Portillo tells him that they had known for some time that he was guilty. We move back to the scene of the film's opening: it is the chapel of the prison in which Ramon is serving his sentence. The priest shows understanding – Ramon is at peace with himself. Later, at visiting time, Sonia shows up to see him she will wait for him to be released and they will start their new life together.

There is a fatal flaw in Francisco J. Lombardi's limp adaptation of

Dostoyevsky's masterpiece of alienation and guilt, *Crime and Punishment*: in transferring this quintessentially Russian work to present-day Peru, he gives an added socio-political edge to the work which radically alters our perspective of its hero Ramon (Raskolnikov in the book). The murders he carries out are of an unscrupulous land-owning couple who are observed to behave in a despicable way towards their tenants; Ramon, already seething with youthful righteousness and revolutionary idealism, has very good reason to wish them dead. And the journey from wish to wish-fulfilment is relatively unburdened by the acute existential dilemmas which so afflict Raskolnikov in the original work.

We are, in other words, too much on the side of the handsome hero dispensing summary justice according to his view of the world – a reaction encouraged in us by Diego Bertie's noble, Christ-like demeanour as he purveys all the rottenness around him. His is a striking performance, but it swings the scales of our sympathy too dramatically for the film's own good. We lose interest in his guilt-ridden fumbblings in the police station for we have little sense of his painful and complicated mental state.

In fact, once the relationship between Ramon and Sonia begins to take on a romantic edge, we are not so very far from a rather conventional angry-young-man meets pious-young-girl who-shows-him-the-way tale, which is something of a travesty of Dostoyevsky's intentions, if not Lombardi's. Sonia, movingly played by Adriana Davila, is a fairly crude religious symbol (she is in fact an amalgam of several Dostoyevskian characters whose moral courage and strength of character both contrasts with Ramon's lack of same, and ultimately grants him the inner peace which he so obviously lacks). But the fact that Ramon declines to tell the story of his downfall in the form of a proper confession hints at Lombardi's ambivalence over drawing too neat a conclusion to his adaptation. One gets the strong feeling that, putting Dostoyevsky to one side, he does not wish to be endorsing the view that the Church alone can solve Peru's many and complicated social problems.

In truth, there is little sense of these problems in *Sin Compasión*; Lombardi's one-paced direction is too narrowly focused on his protagonists, who include a seedy middle-aged man with a penchant for under-age girls, a non-descript police investigator who seems to take a ridiculously long time to notice Ramon's absurd – and obviously guilty – behaviour, and a truly weedy "best friend" figure who makes the Sal Mineo character in *Rebel Without a Cause* look like Sly Stallone. The complicated moral universe inhabited by Dostoyevsky's characters seems a long way indeed from this gallery of one-dimensionality, and Lombardi's final celebration of the redemptive power of love is rendered curiously banal as a result.

Peter Aspden

Tales From the Crypt: Demon Knight

USA 1995

Director: Ernest Dickerson

Certificate
18
Distributor
UIP
Production Company
Universal Pictures
Executive Producers
Richard Donner
David Giler
Walter Hill
Joel Silver
Robert Zemeckis
Producer
Gilbert Adler
Co-producers
Scott Nimerfro
Wendy Wanderman
Alan Katz
Associate Producers
Alexander B. Collett
Dan Cracchiolo
Production Associate
Brian Witten
Production Co-ordinator
Dorothy M. Sidwell
Production Manager
F.A. Miller
Location Manager
Jean Henley
Post-production Supervisor
Robert Parigi
Crypt Keeper
Sequences Director
Gilbert Adler
2nd Unit Director
Shane Dixon
Assistant Directors
Leigh A. Webb
Eric Jones
Reginald Hunter
Crypt Keeper
Sequences:
Garry A. Brown
Nancy Green
Casting
Jaki Brown-Karman
Voice:
Cam Clark/
Loop Therapy
Screenplay
Ethan Reiff
Cyrus Voris
Mark Bishop
Script Supervisor
Cosmo Genovese
Director of Photography
Rick Bota
Crypt Keeper
Sequences:
Rick Bota
Camera Operator
Phil Oetiker
Visual Effects
Available Light Ltd
Visual Effects Design/Supervision
John T. Van Vliet
Effects Producer
Katherine Kean
Optical Supervisor
Beverly Bernacki
Digital Supervisor
Bob Lyss
Additional Digital Visual Effects
4M/C/Digital Magic
Roto Artists
Nancy Oppenheim
Nina Salerno
Matte Painting
Rocco Giofre
Paul Curley
Animation
January Nordman
Laurel Klick
Alan Wolfson
W. L. Arance
Motion Control
Les Bernstein
Tom Shaugnessy
Blue Screen Specialist
Bill Neil

Film Editor
Stephen Lovejoy
Production Designer
Christaan Wagener
Art Director
Colin Irwin
Set Decorator
George Toomer
On-Set Dresser
John Renua
Storyboard Artist
Jennifer Sauer
Crypt Keeper
Sequences:
Mark Baird
Crypt Keeper Sequences
Puppeteer Co-ordinator
Michael Mealiffe
Miniatures Visual Effects
Sessums Engineering
Director of Photography:
Michael O. Sajbel
Unit Manager:
Gary Maxwell
Pyrotechnician:
Ray Oberg
Modelers:
Greg Tracer
Dan Carter
Tory Frank
Set Dressers:
Beverly Sessums
Gara Morton
Jori Hudson
Skip Davis
Special Effects/Animatronics Design
Scott Coulter
Demon Effects
Co-Designer/Supervisor
Scott Patton
Special Effects
Bellissimo/Belardinelli
Effects Inc
Co-ordinators:
Thomas 'Brooklyn'
Bellissimo
Charles 'Gris Gris'
Belardinelli
On-set Effects
Giuliano 'Bad Juju'
Fiumani
Shannon 'El Gato'
Thompson
George 'Sleepy' Zamora
Christy 'The Girl'
Sumner
Dana 'The Neck'
Dispenza
Anthony 'Rocket'
Simonaitis
Cary 'Monkey' Stuart
Crypt Keeper Effects
Kevin Yagher
Productions
Thom Floutz
David Stinnett
Bryan Blair
Mecki Heussen
Erik Schaper
David Mosher
Chris Bergschneider
Costume Design
Warden Neil
Wardrobe Supervisor
Randall Thropp
Make-up
Heads:
Donna-Lou Henderson
Vonda K. Morris
Key:
Justin Henderson
Prosthetic Make-up
Supervisor
Scott Wheeler
Special Make-up Effects
Design/Creation
Todd Masters
Make-up Effects
Project Heads
Bernard Eichholz

Lima, Peru in the 1980s. A young man talks to a priest, needing to unburden himself – but he insists he does not want to have a formal confession. He is Ramon, and he starts his story with his days at university. He is a poor student who is exceptionally bright, but gets into trouble with his university lecturers for espousing his controversial, Nietzschean views on human strength and weakness. At home, he is having trouble in paying the rent, and the landlady gives him an ultimatum – pay what you owe or move out. He witnesses the eviction of a family by the same landlady and feels moral outrage.

Some time later he sees the young

Dave Snyder
Walter T. Phelan Jr
David Matherly
Hairstylist
Daphne Stephen
Maxine Rennes-
Gunderson
Optical Title Design
Paula Silver Ltd
Titles/Opticals
Cinema Research
Corporation
Music
Ed Shearmur
Main Title Theme
Danny Elfman
Music Performed by
London Metropolitan
Orchestra
London Metropolitan
Choir
The Hossam Ramzi
Egyptian Ensemble
Tim Renwick
Executive Music Producer
Michael Kamen
Music Producers
Michael Kamen
Stephen McLaughlin
Christopher Brooks
Music Supervisor
Andrew Leary
Music Editor
Christopher Brooks
Music Consultant
Ran LaFitte
Songs/Music Extracts
"Hey Man Nice Shot"
by Richard Patrick,
performed by Filter;
"Fall Guy" by and
performed by Rollins
Band; "Baby, I Love
You" by Rossevelt
Shannon, performed
by Aretha Franklin;
"Mustang Sally" by
Bonny Rice, performed
by Wilson Pickett;
"Cemetery Gates"
by and performed
by Pantera; "1-800-
Suicide" by A. Berkeley,
R. Diggs, A. Hamilton,
P. Huston, performed
by Gravediggaz;
"Tonight We Murder"
by Alain Jourgensen,
Paul Barker, Frank
Nariello, performed
by Ministry; "Rapp
Payback (Where Iz
Moses)" by S. Brown,
J. Brown, H. Stallings,
performed by James
Brown; "Diadems"
by Dave Mustaine,
performed by
Megadeth; "My
Misery...(Demon
Knight)" by Robb
Flynn, performed
by Machine Head
Production Sound Mixer
Tim Cooney
Supervising Sound Editor
Mark Cookson
Dialogue Editor
David Grant
Louis Creveling
ADR Supervisor
Tim Boggs
Foley Editor
Danielle Ghent
ADR Mixer
Derek Marcl
Foley Mixers
Steve Jaskowski
Steve Heinke
Re-recording Mixers
John Ross
Joshua Schneider
Mathew Waters

Sound Effects Editors
Frank Gaeta
Fred Howard
David Melhase
Sean Garnhart
Gregory J. Hainer
Jason Schmid
Foley Walkers
Tim Chilton
Jill Schachne
Tim Pearson
Stunt Co-ordinator
Shane Dixon

Cast
John Kassir
Voice of the Crypt
Keeper
Billy Zane
The Collector
William Sadler
Brayker
Jada Pinkett
Jeryline
CCH Pounder
Irene
Dick Miller
Uncle Willy
Thomas Haden Church
Roach
John Schuck
Sheriff Tupper
Gary Farmer
Deputy Bob Martel
Charles Fleischer
Wally Enfield
Tim deLam
Homer
Sherrrie Rose
Wanda
Ryan Sean O'Donohue
Danny
Tony Salome
Sirach
Ken Baldwin
Dickerson
Tiffany Anne
Reda Beebe
Te-See Bender
Traci Bingham
Pontil Butler
Veronica Culver
Tina Hollimon
Elaine Marks
Mim Parker
Party Babes
Graham Galloway
Fred
Dale Swann
Bus Driver
Mark D. Kennerly
Other Collector
Peggy Trentini
Amanda
Kathy Barbour
Tina New
Crypt Keeper Starlets
Stephanie Sain
Radio Voice/Mavis
Tom Vincini
Crypt Keeper Body
Double
Van Snowden
Mecki Heussen
N. Brock Winkless IV
Erik Schaper
David Stinnett
F. Charles Lutzus III

8.318 feet
92 minutes

DTS stereo
In colour
Deluxe
Anamorphic

● The Crypt Keeper, a monstrous film director, attends the premiere of his latest film *Demon Knight*...

Wormwood, Texas. Frank Brayker, a 'Demon Knight', is pursued by the Collector, a servant of Hell, across country. Both survive a car crash, but the Collector convinces Sheriff Tupper and Deputy Martel that Brayker is getting away with stolen goods. Brayker takes refuge in a church converted into a motel, but the Collector, who reveals his evil by killing the Sheriff, besieges the place with demon hordes. Trapped with Brayker are Cordelia, a whore; Wally, a just-fired postal worker; Roach, one of Cordelia's customers; Jeryline, a woman convict on a work release scheme; Uncle Willy, a wino; Danny, a child and Irene, the motel manager.

Brayker is custodian of a key-shaped artefact originally filled with the sacred blood of Christ and passed down through the ages by a succession of Demon Knights, the last of whom replenished the artefact with his own blood and gave it to Brayker on a First World War battlefield. The Collector exerts his influence in an attempt to regain the key, which will give Evil dominion over the earth, and each of the motel inhabitants is tempted, possessed or killed until only Brayker and Jeryline remain. Brayker, mortally wounded, recharges the key with his own blood, and gives it to Jeryline, who resists the Collectors advances and destroys him by spitting blood in his face. Jeryline, now a Demon Knight, sets off to travel the world, and a new Collector arrives to pursue her...

Having awarded the right of 'final cut' to the Crypt-Keeper, his producers decide to guillotine him. The severed head cackles.

● The HBO television series *Tales from the Crypt*, based on the well-remembered EC horror comics of the 50s, has been running since 1988, with its distinguished producers Joel

Silver, Walter Hill, Robert Zemeckis and Richard Donner luring a wide selection of big-name talents. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Michael J. Fox and Tom Hanks have all directed episodes, as have career directors such as John Frankenheimer, Russell Mulcahy, Steven E. de Souza and Rowdy Herrington, while Demi Moore and Patricia Arquette have taken lead roles. With a slightly slumming attitude, each of these stars has relished the chance for campy gore.

The current film which has, rather hopefully, a series title and a episode title, opens with a vignette in the typical *Tales from the Crypt* style as a voluptuous, blood-splattered starlet is menaced in the bath by the acid-rotted husband she has just brained with an axe. But this turns out to be an establishing gag that sets up the Crypt Keeper as a film-maker, abusing an unbilled John Larroquette's feeble zombie performance. There was an Amicus anthology called *Tales from the Crypt* in 1972, with Ralph Richardson as the Crypt Keeper, and even a sequel *The Vault of Horror* (1973), but *Tales from the Crypt: Demon Knight* opts not to go directly to the EC comics source material and instead comes up with a story not based on a comic book, or even (as in *Creepshow*) especially indebted to comics in theme and mood.

The *Demon Knight* script actually pre-existed the idea of making a *Crypt* spin-off film and was discovered and dusted off for the project which perhaps explains why it owes more to the post-George Romero world of Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead* than to the comics that are its ostensible inspiration, although *Tales from the Crypt* was itself a key influence on the zombie-littered landscape of the modern American comedy-horror genre. The eternal opposition of the Demon Knights and Collectors has to be taken on trust through speeches of explanation and tiny flashbacks to Golgotha and the battlefields of the First World War, but it is a servicable

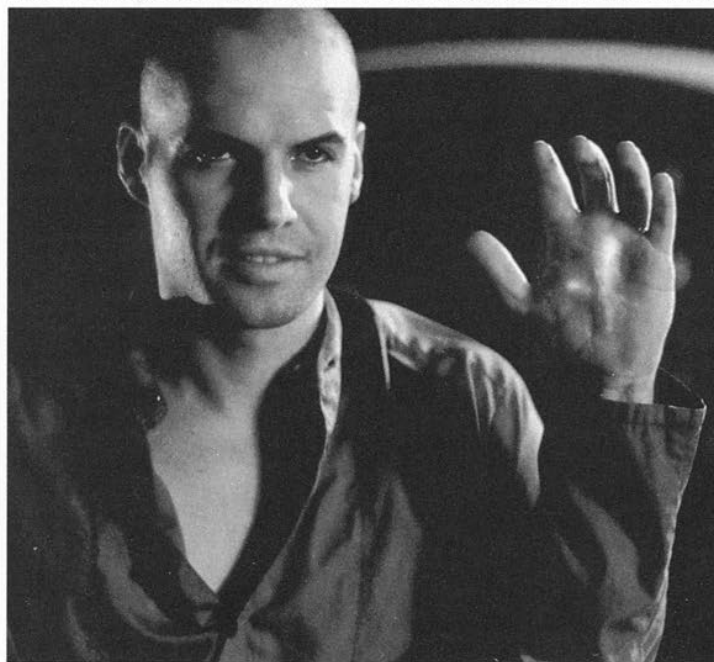
enough backdrop to the basic seige story, with the blood-filled key functioning both as the maguffin and as a weapon against the hordes of hell. There is a touch of Sam Raimi in the use of reanimated and possessed people against the survivors, and a trace of Romero in their specific weakness (here, the zombies can be killed if their glowing green eyes are burst); and the seige set-up owes a great deal to *Rio Bravo*, *The Birds*, *Night of the Living Dead*, *Assault on Precinct 13* and dozens of other scenarios of entrapment and being surrounded.

There is an attempt at an anthology feel as the Collector sets out to tempt or destroy each of the supporting characters: luring Uncle Willy into a world of bottomless bottles and topless girls, playing on Wally's crush on Cordelia, offering the sneaky Roach a straight bargain that he goes back on, finally attempting to seduce Jeryline to his side of the good/evil divide. This gives vignette-like scenes to each stooge and vaguely excuses the simple, comic-book characterisation whereby everybody is given one personality trait and embodies it to excess. Against this backdrop, William Sadler (who was in the *Tales of the Crypt* television pilot) and Billy Zane play nicely, with Sadler going for thin-lipped resolve and inner decency while Zane flamboyantly and aptly overplays, throwing in asides and jokes almost after the manner of the Crypt Keeper himself. There is no depth to these representatives of vast forces, and their cosmic see-sawing is pretty much a joke, but their struggle has a simplicity that is refreshing in an era of genre movies undone by muddy thinking.

The most pleasing aspect of *Demon Knight* is its old-fashioned adherence to horror principles like unity of space and time, the use of great old character actors (Roger Corman veteran Dick Miller) effective gross-outs (the Collector punching clear through Sheriff Tupper's head, Danny's especially ghastly possessed form), sly absurdity (a one-armed woman arming herself with a pump-action shotgun) and an eerily resonant ending (the new Collector waiting for the next bus to begin the cycle anew). The EC comics' morality, which is at least as distinctive as their fondness for repulsive physical detail, is hard to produce in a feature film, although such do-badders as Roach receive their merited come-uppances.

The film is limited by its refusal to probe deeply into its reference to theology, lifting a few bits of costume and imagery from Richard Stanley's *Dust Devil* but never even considering tackling its antagonists in the ambiguous, resonant style of Stanley. It doesn't even make much of its comic book stylisation beyond tilted camera angles and such speech balloon dialogue as "Who are you really?", but it aims for an unassuming, generally ingratiating popcorn picture with enough solid shocks to satisfy horror-starved fans in a dry period.

Kim Newman



Greetings from hell: Billy Zane

NFT FIRST RUN

Blue Sky

USA 1991

Director: Tony Richardson

Certificate
12
Distributor
National Film Theatre/
Columbia TriStar
Production Company
Orion Pictures
Producer
Robert H. Solo
Supervising Producer
John G. Wilson
Co-producer
Lynn Arost
Associate Producer
Rama Laurie Stagner
Production Associate
Michael Casey
Production Co-ordinator
Anna Zappia
Unit Production Manager
John G. Wilson
Location Managers
James Morris
Alabama:
William Brett Haas
Florida:
Steve Franklin
Texas:
Michael Charske
Post-production Supervisors
Sara Romilly
Michael J. Hacker
Marine Co-ordinator
Frances Knight
Aviation Co-ordinator
Charlie R. Hillard
2nd Unit Director
Robert K. Lambert
Assistant Directors
Thomas J. Mack
David Kelley
Stefanie A. Moore
Casting
Lynn Stalmaster
Screenplay
Rama Laurie Stagner
Arlene Sarner
Jerry Leichtling
Story
Rama Laurie Stagner
Script Supervisor
Kate Lewis
Director of Photography
Steve Yaconelli
Camera Operator
Candy Gonzales
Helicopter Camera Operator
Roger Lee Smith
Film Editor
Robert K. Lambert
Production Designer
Timian Alsaker
Art Director
Gary John Constable
Set Decorator
Leslie Rollins
Set Dressers
Matt A. Marich
Kimberly Lannaghan
Lloyd R. Whittaker
Robin Solo
Draughtsman
Robert L. Berry
Scenic Artists
Lead:
Joel Griffith
Geoff Lynn Welch
Special Effects
Cliff Wenger
Mack Chapman
Costume Design
Jane Robinson
Wardrobe Supervisor
P. Kay Morris
Make-up Artists
Dorothy Pearl
Bob Arrollo
Hairstylists
Lyndell Quiyou
Cydney Cornell
Titles/Opticals
CFI/EFX
Music
Jack Nitzsche

Music Performed by
Electronic Keyboards:
Bradford Ellis
Solo:
David Lindley
Music Score Producer
Michael Hoenig
Music Supervisor
Jackie Krost
Music Editor
Richard Whitfield
Music Consultant
Sharyl Churchill
Songs/Music Extracts
"(Baby) You've Got
What It Takes" by
Clyde Otis, Murray
Stein, performed
by Brook Benton,
Dinah Washington;
"Malaguena" by
Ernesto Lecuona,
"Hello, Mary Lou
(Goodbye Heart)"
by Gene Pitney, "It's
Only Make Believe"
by Conway Twitty,
Jack Nance,
"Hernando's Hideaway"
by Richard Adler, Jerry
Ross, performed by
the Billy Lawson Band;
"Young Mind"
by Johnny Meyers,
performed by Johnny
Meyers, Amos Milburn;
"Gonna Do You No
Wrong" by Cliff
Thomas, Ed Thomas,
performed by Cliff
Thomas & The
Heartbeats; "Venus"
by Edward Marshall,
performed by Frankie
Avalon; "Art's Jam"
by and performed
by Art Wheeler;
"National Emblem
March" by E. E. Bagley,
performed by the
University of North
Alabama Marching
Band; "Something's
Got A Hold On Me"
by James Wood
Kirkland, performed
by Etta James
Choreography
Greg Rosatti
Production Sound Mixers
Jacob Goldstein
Susumu Tokunow
Supervising Sound Editor
Bruce Richardson
Supervising ADR Editor
Thomas Whiting
ADR Editor
Denise Whiting Gontz
Recordists
Jack Keller
David Behle
ADR Recordist
Rick Canelli
ADR Mixer
Thomas J. O'Connell
Mixer
Dean Drabin
Re-recording Mixers
Robert J. Litt
Greg P. Russell
Elliot Tyson
Sound Effects Editors
Albert Gasser
Constance A. Kazmer
Gary Wright
Pamela Bentkowski
Richard King
Marguerite Costin
Foley Artists
Robin Harlan
Sarah Jacobs
Military Adviser
James P. Monaghan
Nuclear Effects Adviser
Clyde H. Stagner
Stunt Co-ordinator
Don Pike

Cast
Jessica Lange
Carly Marshall
Tommy Lee Jones
Hank Marshall
Powers Boothe
Vince Johnson
Carrie Snodgrass
Vera Johnson
Amy Locane
Alex Marshall
Chris O'Donnell
Glenn Johnson
Mitchell Ryan
Ray Stevens
Dale Dye
Colonel Mike Anwalt
Tim Scott
Ned Owens
Annie Ross
Lydia
Anna Klemp
Becky Marshall
Anthony Rene Jones
Helicopter Pilot
Jay R. Seidl
Soldier on Island
David Bradford
First Soldier
Matt Battaglia
NATO Soldier
Rene Rokk
Fred Scasso
Victor Lemolo
Bronson Page
Raphael Rey Gomez
Samy G. Bauso
NATO Officers
John J. Fedak
Adjutant
Michael McClendon
Lieutenant Colonel
Jennings
Harriet Courtney Sumner
Shannon Laramore
Salesladies
Ray Sergeant
Administrative First
Sergeant
Merlin Marston
Lieutenant Colonel
George Land

Yvette Smedley
Phyllis Timbes
Libby Whittemore
Clarinda Ross
Donna Biscoe
Officers' Wives
Billy Lawson
Band Leader
Joseph Wilkins
Soldier at Bar
Carl C. Morgan III
Attention Sergeant
Dion Anderson
General Derrick
Richard Jones
Jimmy
Art Wheeler
Piano Player
Sharlene Ross
Nurse
David Lee Lane
Stockade Guard
Ed Lee Corbin
Stockade MP
Gary Bullock
Doctor Vankay
Angela Paton
Dottie Owens
Babs George
Rod Masterson
Sean McGraw
Reporters
David Dwyer
Newscaster
Geoff McKnight
Engineer
Whitt Brantley
Desk Clerk

9,078 feet
101 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
CPI
Prints by
Deluxe

Paradise Island, 1962. Hank Marshall is an Army scientist studying the effects of nuclear fallout who lives on the army base with his wife, Carly, and their two daughters, Alex and Becky. When Carly scandalises the local military community with her nude-sunbathing and kittenish Brigitte Bardot impersonations, the family is transferred to Anniston Alabama. Upon arriving at the dilapidated house assigned to them, Carly, who has a history of mental instability and marital infidelity (and is now modelling her dress and hair on Marilyn Monroe), becomes hysterical and goes into a depressive state.

Hank copes with the domestic chores until she rallies. She joins the officers' wives' dramatic society, while Alex becomes friendly with Glenn, the son of Hank's commanding officer, Vince Johnson. At a dance, Carly grinds and bumps with Vince provocatively in clear view of everyone, not least Hank. With a lecherous eye on Carly, Vince has Hank transferred to the Blue Sky project in Nevada, where they are pioneering the underground detonation of nuclear weapons. Two cowboys inadvertently wander into the range during a test and are irradiated, but no one will heed Hank's calls for stricter precautions and compensation for these indifferent victims of fallout.

Back in Anniston, lonely for Hank, Carly has sex with Vince. Alex and Glenn stumble upon them and the news spreads throughout the base. The

officers' wives silently snub Carly, and Alex insists that she call Hank in Nevada and confess her betrayal. He returns to Anniston, and an argument with Vince about the Blue Sky project results in Hank punching him in the face. The Army persuades Carly to have Hank committed to a psychiatric hospital "for his own good", but really in order to shut him up about the Blue Sky project. When she sees him heavily drugged and with his spirit broken, Carly decides that the only way to secure his release is by exposing the Blue Sky project to media attention.

She goes to Nevada, rides into the test site on horseback, and is promptly arrested, drawing the attention of reporters. Carly negotiates with the army to remain silent if they give Hank a discharge. Finally reunited, the family are last seen bound for Berkeley, California, where Hank is to take up a teaching post where he can freely express his now firm anti-nuclear philosophy. Carly has had a makeover and now looks like Elizabeth Taylor.

Most feature films have a few subplots that intersect or overlap with the main one, but *Blue Sky* seems more like two separate films loosely stitched together. One is about a marriage on the edge of a nervous breakdown, Carly's sporadic mental instability continually threatening to implode the fragile domestic bubble. The other film concerns the explosive fallout (literally and figuratively) of a military coverup during the early 60s atomic research programme. To bring these two films together, *Blue Sky* pivots its plot around the quantum mechanics of a nuclear family.

Despite being partly based on the childhood of one of the producers, Rama Laurie Stagner, the cold fusion of these two plots feels more like something thrown up by a screenwriters' brainstorming session, an exercise in stretching metaphor rather than an integrated realist narrative. The weakness of the bonding becomes clearly apparent at the most critical points: instead of attacking Vernon for fucking his wife, Hank confronts him about the management of the *Blue Sky* project. Alright, so he's meant to be in denial, but this is pushing it a little too far in the light of what we've already learned about him. Similarly Carly's final act of heroism, which all too neatly excul-



Bombshell: Tommy Lee Jones, Jessica Lange

pates her guilt, seems unfeasibly resourceful for a woman whose character has been established as so feckless. More than anything, the latter plot twist seems fashioned to allow Lange and the film-makers to pay homage to Marilyn Monroe in *The Misfits*, whose final act of heroism also served to erase the stain of her character's sexuality. *Blue Sky* won't allow itself to be as dark as this earlier film, a pity because a tragic ending, with Carly fried in the fission blast or Hank lobotomised (as he seems to be at one point) would have endowed the film with more emotional gravity. Instead we get a happily reconstituted molecule of domestic bliss, poised to catalyse the 60s with a proto-hippy philosophy of peace and disarmament.

What carries the movie in the end, and, despite its fundamental flaws, makes it compulsively watchable, are the lead actors' finely grained performances. Jessica Lange has already been lavishly praised and duly rewarded with an academy award for her turn as Carly, which although very good is perhaps just a trifle overwrought. Good hysterics are like a pavlovian bell to critics and academy members, setting off droolings of praise. More impressive are her quieter moments. As the family drives to their new house, the street becoming progressively seedier, optimism and resolve slackens from her face by tiny degrees beautifully rendered. Equally, Tommy Lee Jones in the more subtle but possibly more challenging role of Hank, reaffirms what a fine actor he is. By the most delicate of gestures and expressions he conveys both the rigidity and the sexual obsessiveness so crucial to the character and so unexplained and avoided by the dialogue.

This was Tony Richardson's last film, and it seems appropriate that for a director so much associated with the 50s and 60s (even though he made several fine films in subsequent decades) he should have concluded his career with a period piece about the kind of instinctive rebel who eventually made things swing. This film also demonstrates both his greatest strengths and his blind spots as a film-maker. It illustrates how he could draw out better performances from accomplished thespians than they offered as a matter of routine, a point proved with Laurence Olivier in *The Entertainer* and Albert Finney in *Tom Jones*, and even coax remarkable tonal variations from more limited performers such as Rita Tushingham and Jack Nicholson. (Nicholson's unsympathetic character's sacrifice in *The Border* bears some similarity to Carly's.) But here, as in some of Tony Richardson's weaker films such as *The Hotel New Hampshire*, he exhibits a tendency to cram too much in and to overindulge a promising but fractious screenplay. Still, for all its faults, *Blue Sky* remains a worthy send-off for one of Britain's more mercurial and intriguing directors, one that really deserves better than its limited theatrical release in this country.

Leslie Felperin

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**Sight
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VIDEO

Mark Kermode and Geoffrey Macnab highlight their ten video choices of the month, and overleaf review, respectively, the rest of the rental and retail releases

VIDEO CHOICE

Witch Hunt

Director Paul Schrader/USA 1994

An intriguing companion piece to the excellent *Cast a Deadly Spell*, this surreal thriller is set in a nostalgic world in which magic is part of ordinary life. Using a fantastical narrative to take satirical pot shots at the McCarthy purges of the 50s, *Witch Hunt* pitches Dennis Hopper as Private Investigator H.P. Lovecraft against a scheming politician (Eric Bogosian) who wishes to rid Hollywood of its magic sparkle. Paul

Schrader maintains a balance between the ordinary and the supernatural, and astutely mixes cruelty with comedy. Hopper is dapper in a 'hep' costume (shades, flecked jacket and inch-wide tie) and Bogosian excels as the fiendish slimeball. Julian Sands lets the piece down with a cod Irish accent.

● Rental Premiere: Ocean Pictures G8828; Certificate 18; 98 minutes; Producer Michael R. Joyce; Screenplay Joseph Dougherty; Lead Actors Dennis Hopper, Penelope Ann Miller, Eric Bogosian, Julian Sands

Wes Craven's New Nightmare

Director Wes Craven/USA 1994

Far and away the finest Freddy flic since Craven's original *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, this reality-based epilogue resurrects a spectre long since declared dead. Having seen Mr Krueger first sanitised then sunk by a string of increasingly limp sequels, director Wes Craven and slimy executive Bob Shaye (playing themselves) implore actress Heather Langenkamp to return to Elm Street one last time. Beset by mysterious phone calls and protective of her young son (whom she forbids from watching *Nightmare*), Langenkamp,

nevertheless, is lured back, only to discover something more than Robert Englund in a rubber mask lurking behind the face of Freddy. Skilfully blurring the line between real life and fiction, this audacious deconstruction is a film for die-hard horror fans. It titillates the intellect while delivering thrills, spills and chills. There are problems; Craven is an inventive director, but he is not an actor, and some of the expository dialogue (although necessary) borders on the comic. However, if you were bored by the increasingly insipid *Elm Street* production line this will turn you into a born again Freddy fan.

(S&S January 1995)

● Rental: Guild G8791; Certificate 18



Freddy's home: 'Wes Craven's New Nightmare'

Forrest Gump

Director Robert Zemeckis/USA 1994

Following a clean sweep at the Oscars, Zemeckis' critically maligned epic fantasy is one of this year's most desirable films on video. Following the disparate life paths of amiable Southern fool Forrest Gump (Tom Hanks) and his streetwise sweetheart Jenny (Robin Wright), the

movie charts the schizophrenic course of American social history from the 50s to the present day. Despite being labelled by some critics as "re-actionary" and "Reaganite", *Forrest Gump* is a film which mirrors the mood of its audience and is open to numerous interpretations.

While Zemeckis' interweaving of archive news footage and complex special effects into the narrative is skilful, it is his astute



Jungle fever: Klaus Kinski

Aguirre, Wrath of God (Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes)/Land of Silence and Darkness (Land des Schweigens und der Dunkelheit)

Director Werner Herzog/West Germany 1972/1971

Herzog's epic about Spanish conquistadors in search of gold deep in the Peruvian jungle unfolds like a Middle Ages version of *Apocalypse Now*. The narrative centres on a long river journey in which the further Aguirre and his renegades venture into uncharted territory, the looser their grasp on sanity becomes. In equal parts an indictment of the colonialist spirit and a celebration of obsessive endeavour, the film boasts first-rate location photography. Klaus Kinski delivers a chilling central performance – gaunt and manic, his Aguirre is malevolence incarnate. Aguirre proclaims himself Emperor, rails at the birds and – in one memorable scene – decapitates a follower rash enough to criticise his ways (the head talks for an instant after it is severed). Be warned, there is some idiosyncratic spelling in the subtitles. Included on the tape is the documentary, *Land of Silence and Darkness*, which profiles a remarkable 56-year-old woman who lost her sight at 15, her hearing at 18, but who then devoted her life to helping others similarly afflicted.

(MFB Nos. 492/593)

● Retail: Tartan Video TVT 1211; Price £10.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15

use of period pop music to evoke the changing face of America which impresses. As in Philip Kaufman's film, *The Wanderers* (1979), the music plays as big a part in the movie as the actors. Rent the video, buy the soundtrack album and decide for yourself what Gump's message truly is. (S&S October 1994)

● Rental: CIC VHB 2982; Certificate 12



Southern comfort: Tom Hanks, right



High kicks:
'Sun Valley Serenade'

Sun Valley Serenade

Director H. Bruce Humberstone/USA 1941

It's all aboard the Chattanooga Choo Choo for this flimsy but highly entertaining musical, released to mark the 50th anniversary of Glenn Miller's death. The story about a struggling big band who are signed up to play at an exclusive ski resort is pure hokum, but it's the musical set pieces which matter. Along the way, there is an outstanding tap routine from the Nicholas Brothers, who dance at a pace which makes Astaire

and Kelly look leaden, and a bizarre sequence choreographed by Hermes Pan, which has Norwegian skating star Sonja Henie doing her leaps and pirouettes on black ice. There are also regular, swirling bursts of Glenn Miller and his orchestra. Schmaltzy and insubstantial, this is the antithesis of *New York, New York*, Martin Scorsese's much darker evocation of the big band era. (MFB No. 95)

● Retail: Fox Video 1733s; Price £12.99; B/W; Certificate U



Double identity: Phoebe Cates as the mysterious princess

Princess Caraboo

Director Michael Austin/USA 1994

The surprise comedy release of the year, this immensely likeable period romp boasts top satirical turns from Jim Broadbent, Kevin Kline, Stephen Rea and a charming central performance from the underrated Phoebe Cates. An exotic

waif found wandering the Devon countryside, infiltrates high society by suggesting a royal heritage. But there are doubts as to her authenticity as a real princess. Michael Austin makes the most of the intriguing premise and legendary lensman Freddie Francis adds visual splendour. (S&S January 1995)

● Rental: EV EVV 1310; Certificate PG

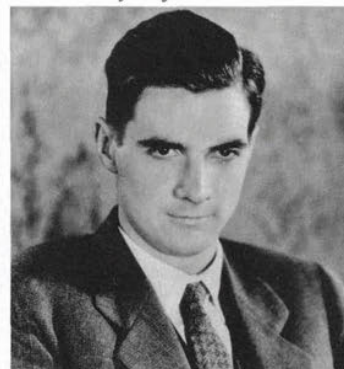
The Amazing Howard Hughes

Director William A. Graham/USA 1977

Outside *Citizen Kane*, it's hard to think of many more contradictory tycoons, in fact or fiction, than Howard Hughes. He was that rare phenomenon: an all-American hero who seemed heartily to despise the American way of life. He has been played memorably before – in Jonathan Demme's *Melvin and Howard*, Jason Robards caricatured him as a mad motorbike riding visionary. But in Graham's film, Tommy Lee Jones offers an infinitely more rounded portrayal. Jones captures the restless, freewheeling entrepreneurialism of Hughes. His Hughes is also appealingly naive: he never remembers people's names and recognises neither status nor celebrity. Jones expertly shows how this lack of curiosity slowly transforms him into a lonely, reclusive figure, alienated from

the outside world by his vast fortune. It's a superb piece of character acting which buoys up an otherwise forgettable film.

● Retail Premiere: Warner Home Video SO38629; Price £10.99; Certificate PG; 118 minutes; Producer Herbert Hirschman; Screenplay John Gray; Lead Actors Tommy Lee Jones, Ed Flanders



Recluse: the real Howard Hughes

The Violent Years

Director Franz Eichhorn/USA 1956

In the wake of Tim Burton's film *Ed Wood*, there has been a clamour by video distributors to rush out Wood's oeuvre. Wood didn't direct this fascinating, gloriously botched affair, but he wrote the screenplay, and every frame of the film carries his unique imprimatur. Uncharacteristically for Wood, this is a teen pic, without any hint of vampires, ghouls or flying saucers. But it's packed with all his usual tropes: it uses a pious, cliché-ridden voice over; the dialogue is laughable, and the direction is ham-fisted. Evidently intended as a warning to

parents about the dangers of leaving their adolescent daughters to their own devices, it features a young heroine who comes from the suburbs, but leads a secret life as a gang leader. She and her friends rob garages, wreck schools, and even shoot the occasional policeman. In its own clunking way, *The Violent Years* exposes the tensions simmering beneath the surface of bland, 50s middle-class America.

● Retail Premiere: Warner Music Vision 8122 72404-3; Price £9.99; B/W; Certificate tbc; 62 minutes; Producer Del Productions; Screenplay Edward D. Wood Jr; Lead Actors Jean Moorhead, Barbara Weeks

Smash Palace

Director Roger Donaldson/New Zealand 1981

A gritty, unprepossessing drama about the break-up of a marriage, *Smash Palace* is a long way removed from the kind of films which Donaldson (director of *Cocktail* and *The Getaway*) is making in Hollywood these days. Bruno Lawrence plays a retired racing driver who runs a junkyard which is full of cars salvaged from road accidents. Anna Jemison is his wife, a sort of Kiwi Madame Bovary who sickens of her dreary, provincial existence. The occasional car smashes notwithstanding, the film is short on spectacle. Donaldson approaches the material in a downbeat, naturalistic style. But he captures brilliantly the deadening



Paradise lost: Bruno Lawrence

effect smalltown life and a culture of machismo can have on relationships. (MFB No. 593)

● Rental: Art House AHP 5018; Price £12.99; Certificate 18

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

Director Kenneth Branagh/USA 1994

A companion piece to Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, this unashamedly melodramatic romp was torn to shreds by critics on its release. It's easy to see why: Branagh's central performance as the genius-turned-madman is vain; the extravagant sets (which swallowed so much of the budget) seem stagey; and the surging score veers between portentous and hysterical. Yet, despite such flaws (or perhaps because of them), this takes an impressive stab at a majestic text, and perfectly captures the pace and melodramatic excesses of Mary Shelley's original. Branagh's theatrical interpretation means that once again *Frankenstein* becomes a full-blown gothic romance, which tugs at the heartstrings. Robert De Niro's creature is aided by Daniel Parker's startling make-up effects, which lose none of their visceral power on the small screen. (S&S December 1994)

● Rental: Columbia TriStar CVT 21976; Certificate 18



Living undercover: Robert De Niro

Reviews in *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound* are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

Airheads

Director Michael Lehmann; USA 1994; FoxVideo 8602; Certificate 15

A serviceable satirical rock spoof from the director of *Meet the Applegates* and *Hudson Hawk*. An unsuccessful rock group called The Lone Rangers holds up a radio station so as to get their demo tape played. Joe Mantegna is great as the frizzy-haired DJ forced to endure the band. (S&S November 1994)

Chasers

Director Dennis Hopper; USA 1994; Warner V013440; Certificate 15

An oddly misjudged rip-off of *The Last Detail*, featuring a dismal performance from *Baywatch* pin-up Erika Eleniak. Two navy officers (Tom Berenger, William McNamara) are despatched to retrieve a deserter who turns out to be a curvaceous rascal (Eleniak). Another directorial false-step from Hopper. (S&S January 1995) □

I Love Trouble

Director Charles Shyer; USA 1994; D341092; Certificate PG

Bad would-be screwball comedy, which fails to create any nostalgic charm. Julia Roberts and Nick Nolte star as competing newshounds on the scent of a big story. Dreadful script, leaden direction and grimly cheesy central performances. (S&S December 1994)

Killing Zoe

Director Roger Avary; France/USA 1994; PolyGram PG 1017; Certificate 18

Long-time Tarantino collaborator Roger Avary brews up an explosive but ultimately vacuous cocktail of hard-boiled pulp action. An American in Paris (Eric Stoltz) participates in a bloody bank robbery, only to find his new love (Julie Delpy) among the hostages. Notable for its excellent, aggressive score by New York techno wizards, Tomandandy. (S&S January 1995)

Second Best

Director Chris Menges; USA 1993; Warner V013571; Certificate 15

Strong ensemble performances from, among others, William Hurt and Keith Allen, and a moving score by stalwart British composer Simon Boswell fail to save this worthy drama. A reclusive man's ordered but stifling world is thrown into disarray after he adopts a troublesome child. (S&S January 1995)

The Shadow

Director Russell Mulcahy; USA 1994; Universal VHA 1813; Certificate 12

Impressive visuals, inventive special effects and a fine sense of authentic 30s futurism boost this latest offering from Mulcahy. Alec Baldwin is surprisingly well cast as the legendary crime fighter with mysterious supernatural powers, but former pop-promo director Mulcahy



Lone Rangers: 'Airheads'

fails to marry the startling visuals with a coherent, involving narrative. (S&S November 1994)

The Specialist

Director Luis Llosa; USA 1994; Warner V013574; Certificate 18

Inept thriller, with a dreadful performance by Sylvester Stallone and showing up Sharon Stone as little more than a clothes-horse. A sultry woman hires an explosives expert to avenge the murder of her parents by a mob boss. Unintentional highlights include Rod Steiger as the chief hood, and the muscle-flexing sex scenes. (S&S January 1995) □

Three Colours Red (Trois Couleurs: Rouge)

Director Krzysztof Kieślowski; France 1994; Artificial Eye ART 105R; Certificate 15 (S&S Video Retail May 1995)

Trial By Jury

Director Heywood Gould; USA 1994; Warner V013515; Certificate 18

A law-abiding woman, called to jury service, is both intimidated and entranced by a ruthless mob boss. Sensationalist nonsense, brought to its knees by Joanne Whalley-Kilmer's uninvolved star turn and a silly script. (S&S January 1995) □

War of the Buttons

Director John Roberts; UK/France 1993; Warner V013572; Certificate 12

The feuding children of two neighbouring Irish villages learn about love, war and democracy through their mischievous games. Recalling the heyday of the Children's Film Foundation, this good-hearted and intelligent kids' film is thought-provoking, entertaining and just



Dealing a blow: 'The Shadow'

a little magical. (S&S November 1994)

Wrestling Ernest Hemmingway

Director Randa Haines; USA 1994; Warner V012993; Certificate 12

Two lonely old codgers strike up an unlikely friendship which reignites their love for life. Robert Duvall and Richard Harris are excellent in this unashamedly melancholic actors piece which, although often languorous, is rewarding viewing. Rising star Sandra Bullock lends support. (S&S October 1994) □

Rental Premiere

Beastalk

Director Michael Paul Davis; USA 1994; Paramount VHB 4124; Certificate U; 78 minutes; Producers Charles Band, Debra Dion; Screenplay Michael Paul Davis; Lead Actors J.D. Daniels, Amy Stock-Poynton, Patrick Renna, Richard Moll; Margot Kidder

A modern retelling of the classic Jack and the Beanstalk yarn, made for the small screen and younger viewers. Mad scientist Margot Kidder plants the seeds which help small town boy Jack Taylor save his mum from bankruptcy.

The Haunting of Seaciff Inn

Director Walter Klenhard; USA 1994; Universal VHA 1854; Certificate 15; 89 minutes; Producer Timothy Marx; Screenplay Walter Klenhard; Lead Actors Ally Sheedy, William R. Moses, Louise Fletcher

An above average ghost story, low on schlocky special effects but filled with enough atmospheric tension to more than pass the time. A yuppie couple, on the run from the rigours of city life, buy an impressive cliff-top guest house left vacant after the violent death of an old woman. Sheedy and Moses are fun as the couple with skeletons in their closets, while a haggard looking Louise Fletcher makes a startling appearance.

The Ice Runner

Director Barry Samson; Russia/USA 1993; Guild G8807; Certificate 15; 122 minutes; Producer Jeffrey M. Sneller; Screenplay

Joyce Warren, Clifford Coleman, Joshua Stallings; Lead Actors Edward Albert, Victor Wong, Olga Kabo, Eugene Lazarev

An ambitious but uneven thriller, played out against a picturesque backdrop of Siberian snowscapes and grim Russian environs. A former spy (Albert) is betrayed by the Americans and sentenced to life in

a Russian labour camp, where he adopts a new identity. Albert is miscast in the lead role, but the Russian extras add authenticity. Worth watching for the sequence in which a gigantic ice-breaker appears from out of the mist, providing our hero with a getaway.

Indecent Behaviour II

Director Carlo Gustaff; USA 1994; Hi Fliers HFV 8296; Certificate 18; 90 minutes; Producer Michael Cain; Screenplay Mike Snyder, Phoebe Caulfield, Joyce James; Lead Actors Shannon Tweed, James Brolin, Cynthia Steele, Rochelle Swanson, Chad McQueen

Tepid sequel to the strangely endearing *Indecent Behaviour*. Sex therapist Rebecca Mathis (Shannon Tweed) is drawn into a web of intrigue when one of her clients is brutally murdered. Carlo Gustaff's direction has none of the sleaze appeal of Gregory Hippolyte, in whose infamous footsteps he follows.

Past Tense

Director Graeme Clifford; USA 1994; PolyGram PG 1077; Certificate 18; 87 minutes; Producer Stephen Brown, Nana Greenwald; Screenplay Scott Frost, Miguel Tegoda-Flores; Lead Actors Scott Glenn, Lara Flynn Boyle, Anthony LaPaglia; Graeme Clifford

Director Clifford's track record is schizophrenic – swinging from the controlled power of *Frances* to his quirky *Twin Peaks* episodes, through to the tedium of *Ruby Cairo*. Within this twisty psychological thriller are traces of both his best and worst. It demonstrates a flair for whacky, surreal suspense and glossy sleaze, but is let down by weak characterisations and plot. Glenn and Boyle do their best, leaving Clifford to wrestle with the illogical sub-*Twilight Zone* narrative. Silly but enjoyable.

Perfect Alibi

Director Kevin Meyer; USA 1994; Hi Fliers HFV 8303; Certificate 15; 96 minutes; Producer Bruce Cohn Curtis; Screenplay Kevin Meyer; Lead Actors Hector Elizondo, Teri Garr, Kathleen Quinlan, Alex McArthur

Tepid derivative of the erotic thriller genre, woefully low in suspense, surprise and sleaze. An uptight European au pair turns out to be a sultry, crazed psycho. Alex McArthur and Teri Garr struggle hard to look interested, but it's a losing battle.

Spitfire

Director Albert Pyun; USA 1994; Hi Fliers HFV 8289; Certificate 15; 91 minutes; Producers Gary Schmoeller, Tom Karnowski; Screenplay Albert Pyun, David Yorkin, Chris Borkgren; Lead Actors Kristie Phillips, Lance Henriksen, Tim Thomerson, Sarah Douglas

Hilariously hokey James Bond rip-off from the high priest of trash, Albert Pyun. Lance Henriksen is a hoot as the gun-wielding, tuxedo-clad agent whose athletic daughter, unexpectedly, becomes his sidekick. Tim Thomerson lends smirking support.

T-Force

Director Richard Pepin; USA 1994; Guild G8782; Certificate 18; 89 minutes; Producers

Richard Pepin, Joseph Merhi; Screenplay Jacobsen Hart; Lead Actors Jack Scalia, Evan Lurie, Erin Gray, Bobby Johnston

When a group of four crime fighting cyborgs are decommissioned, three go AWOL and the fourth assists in their capture and destruction. After an unpromising opening (guns, explosions

PRIVATE VIEW

Jonathan Ross on the cult series 'The X-Files'

Talking with aliens

"Oooh-wooh oooh-wooh weee oooh. Oooh-wooh oooh-wooh eeee oooh. Oooh-wooh eehwooh eeeh woo... eeeh woo." How can you not hum along to the theme from the television series *The X-Files*? From the moment I sat down to watch the first episode when it was first shown in the States (I just want to establish that I was on this bandwagon from the beginning), I knew that if for no other reason than its signature tune, the show would have its fans. In fact, I would say that without the eerily catchy theme it wouldn't have become the smash it has. Let's face it - one of the best things about the original *Star Trek* was its impossibly high-pitched singalong theme; not just a fine and memorable signature but also a guaranteed method of working out which of your school friends had gone through puberty.

But, to be fair, there is so much more to the growing popularity of *The X-Files* than just a toe-tapping first two minutes. The basic premise of two FBI agents looking into the paranormal is, in the vernacular of teenage Americans, "way cool". But these FBI agents would be more at home in *Twin Peaks* country than *Hill Street Blues* - which is why it works so well. It's as if the cast of an intelligent modern cop show suddenly woke up to find that instead of drug dealers and pimps they were trying to get the goods on UFOs and little green men. Of course, as cops go, sexy Scully and handsome Fox Mulder are not just open to the suggestion that aliens and telepaths and psycho-clones and loony liver-eaters are out there, but are positively gagging for the chance to prove what we already believe: they exist, dammit, and the Government won't let us look at the scary photos and alien corpses they have collected over the years.

As with its worthy predecessor, *Twin Peaks*, the show has a languid pace, a rare thing these days. But unlike the soporific torpor of, say, *Inspector Morse*, our American friends get it just right - it's slow moving but never ponderous. Character and atmosphere are skilfully and economically doled out (as much to do with budgetary constraints as style, I suspect). Central performances are excellent - David Duchovny captures Mulder's dry, off-beat wit, complementing Gillian Anderson's Scully, with her slightly frosty but wry ripostes. And when they get together, the sexual chemistry is explosive!

The look of the show is marvellous - the stark FBI outfits and the generally realistic look of the sets contrasting perfectly with the weirdness of the subject matter. Unlike *Twin Peaks*, which eventually drowned in the puddle of its own drippy artiness, *The X-Files* walks a fine line between stylish design and realism, perfectly. Several episodes leap out in particular; the two-parter *Duane Barry* and *Ascension* from the second season are particularly fine examples of the TV show as movie. *The X-Files* is played as a team effort - lighting, acting,



Out there: Gillian Anderson, David Duchovny

writing, direction, all conspire together to create the perfect atmosphere of believable disbelief that leads up to the big 'What if?' at the core of each episode.

There have been a couple of duds - *Space*, with its silly moon-ghost and astonishingly tasteless reference to the shuttle disaster, and *Die Hand Die Verleht*, featuring a silly black magic P.T.A. It is worth noting that it was the attempt at campy and schlocky gory humour in the latter that failed - viewers laughed at the show rather than with it. Seeing a replacement teacher opening her desk drawer and finding human organs sitting on top of the homework to be marked... well, it was just a little too silly. At its best, *The X-Files* obeys the golden rule of TV horror, which is, what you don't see will scare you the most.

Although, for the most part, it's played pretty straight, the show has had its moments, even going so far as to dabble in self-parody in the slick, sophisticated and funny freakshow episode, *Humbug*. Those who wish to get hoity-toity might want to note that once or twice the episodes have been a little less than original. One of the strands in the otherwise excellent *Beyond the Sea*, blatantly ripped off the underrated movie, *Exorcist 3*, even down to casting Brad Dourif in virtually the same role he played in the movie; and *Ice*, in which our fearless investigators get stranded with strangers in an Arctic science research complex while an unseen parasite hides in one of their bodies - excuse me, but didn't John Carpenter use that exact set-

up for his remake of *The Thing*?

But television has a long and noble tradition of stealing ideas from the movies, and even from other television shows, so maybe it's the overall level of originality that should impress us, not the occasional little act of borrowing that occurs. If, when it's bad, it's mildly disappointing, then when it's good, it is very good indeed.

Will success ruin *The X-Files*? Already you can buy the paperback, t-shirts, comicbooks, mugs, tote-bags and so on. But, remarkably, the show itself has remained true to its early promise, and has yet to succumb to the lure of the chase scene or the more obvious heroics associated with prime-time crime and sci-fi. In fact, as heroes go, Fox Mulder spends far too much time on the receiving end of fists and blunt objects to ever get asked to join *The A-Team*, and despite the odd tease, Scully has yet to flash any cleavage.

My one fear is that as Mulder edges ever closer to finding out where his abducted sister is, then the impetus will dry up, and instead of an episodic series consisting of stand-alone tales we'll wind up with a grown up version of *Scooby-Doo*. Unlike our cartoon pals in the Mystery Machine, however, Scully and Mulder will fail to completely solve yet another bloody case each and every week. And, come to think of it, if ever they feel that it's getting stale, then a doggy side-kick might not be a bad idea.

The X-Files series is available on video from FoxVideo

and no plot) this settles into an unoriginal but not uninteresting robot drama. Jack Scalia is perfectly cast as the cyborg-hating cop forced to team up with a tir-man, while Pepin tempers the inevitable dreary shoot-outs with some moments of character development.

Undercover Angel

Director George Axmith; USA 1994; Hi Fliers HFV 8298; Certificate 18; 94 minutes; Producers Brad Southwick, Gary Depew; Screenplay Dode B. Levenson, Frank Chance; Lead Actors Darlene Vogel, Shane Fraser, Sam Phillips A pitiful sexy thriller, cheap, nasty and, most annoyingly, not in the least bit depraved. A former hooker-turned-forensic-photographer (don't laugh) is sent undercover on Hollywood's streets, posing as a prostitute. Roddy McDowell turns up to collect his money - how the mighty have fallen.

Retail

Alexander Nevsky

Director Sergei Eisenstein; USSR 1938; RCA Victor 09026-62705-3; Price £13.99 (tbc); Subtitles; Certificate U A brilliantly effective piece of anti-Nazi propaganda, commissioned by Stalin and intended to boost Russian morale. Eisenstein eschews montage, aiming instead for a simple storytelling style. It features the famous battle on the ice in which thirteenth century warrior prince Nevsky defeats the Teutonic Knights, the "Iron Swine", with tactics inspired by an old folktale. The film has been restored and Prokofiev's tremendous score has been re-recorded by the St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra. (MFB No. 65)

Beethoven's 2nd

Director Rod Daniel; USA 1993; Universal VHR 1752; Price £10.99; Certificate U (S&S April 1994)

Countdown

Director Robert Altman; USA 1967; Warner Home Video S011300; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 A long way short of Altman's finest hour, this is a dated lunar saga, set in the days when America and Russia were competing for the first moon landing. There's a wealth of gadgetry on display and some nifty special effects, but the action is drawn out, the script lacks bite and Altman's usual humour is missing. Main point of interest is the pairing of James Caan and Robert Duvall several years before *The Godfather*. (MFB No. 404)

The Damned

Director Luchino Visconti; West Germany/Italy 1969; Warner Home Video S012653; Price £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate 18 Absurdly overcooked soap opera set in 30s Germany. A family of wealthy steel manufacturers squabble with one another, and do their best to ingratiate themselves with the Nazis. Rococo sets and extravagant acting from an international cast (Dirk Bogarde, Helmut Berger and Ingrid Thulin among them) ensure there aren't too many longueurs. But Visconti's hyperbolic style and a determinedly decadent script, which runs the gamut from paedophilia to incest, make this an enervating experience. (MFB No. 436)

Dear Diary (Caro diario)

Nanni Moretti; Italy 1994; Artificial Eye ART 107; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
As Moretti scoots round Rome on his Vespa, *Dear Diary* seems at first like a charming but somewhat winsome survey of its director/star's hobby horses, which include Rome's architecture, movies and actress Jennifer Beals. But any directorial vanity is more than atoned for by Moretti's unflinching honesty. With its fluid, essayistic structure, spectacular location photography of Stromboli and Salina, and a strong vein of satirical self-mockery, this confessional is a delight. (S&S December 1994)

The Diary of Anne Frank

Director George Stevens; USA 1959; FoxVideo Studio Classics 8663S; Price £12.99; Widescreen; B/W; Certificate U
Mawkish but well crafted screen version of the famous story about two Jewish families in an Amsterdam attic, hiding from the Nazis. Although nearly three hours long, the pace never flags. Superb widescreen cinematography and some nicely observed character playing from Shelley Winters and Joseph Schildkraut just about make up for Millie Perkins' winsome squeakiness in the lead role. (MFB No. 306)

Dr Crippen

Director Robert Lynn; UK 1962; Lumiere Lum 2243; Price £10.99; B/W; Certificate 15
A cinematic equivalent of a trip to Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors, this is a very English affair, atmospherically shot by Nic Roeg. Crippen is introduced at court as a "monster in human form". It's a role heaven sent for Donald Pleasence: he plays the murderer as a sympathetic figure who is driven to his grisly crime by his hectoring wife, Coral Browne. (MFB No. 357)

Dune

Director David Lynch; USA 1984; PolyGram Video 6373803; Price £10.99; Certificate 15
(MFB No. 613)

Earth Girls are Easy

Director Julian Temple; USA 1988; PolyGram Video 6326803; Price £10.99; Certificate PG
(MFB No. 671)

Ed Wood Presents Collection:

Bride of the Monster

USA 1955; Subway PV 2296; Price £9.99; B/W; Certificate PG

Jail Bait

USA 1954; Subway PV 2297; Price £9.99; B/W; Certificate PG

Night of the Ghouls

USA 1958; Subway PV 2295; Price £9.99; B/W; Certificate PG

Plan 9 from Outer Space

Director Edward D. Wood Jr.; USA 1956; Subway PV 2294; Price £9.99; B/W; Certificate PG
A collection of Ed Wood films, the best of which is *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. "We are all interested in the future because that is where we are going to spend the rest of our lives." Ed Wood's dialogue is every bit as creaky as the rest of his film-making armoury. This is his most famous work, a justly celebrated account of aliens coming to earth to resurrect the dead. From the credits (emblazoned on grave



Cheap thrills: 'Ed Wood Presents Collection'

stones) to Bela Lugosi's bizarre cameo and Tor Johnson's Inspector Clay (fat, bald and uncannily like Orson Welles' Hank Quinlan in *A Touch of Evil*) there is much to savour. The flying saucers (plates? frisbees?) are his masterstroke. (MFB Nos. 315)

Far from the Madding Crowd

Director John Schlesinger; UK 1967; Lumiere Lum 2006; Price £10.99; Certificate U
Spectacular production design from Losey's collaborator, Richard MacDonald, and lensing from Nic Roeg ensure this adaptation of Hardy's novel looks sumptuous. It's also interesting for the different kinds of English masculinity on display: Peter Finch is the classic repressed sort; Alan Bates the stout country yeoman, and Terence Stamp brings an incongruous whiff of 60s London to nineteenth century Dorset. Julie Christie struggles to choose between them. (MFB No. 407)

Frankenstein Created Woman

Director Terence Fisher; UK 1967; Lumiere Lum 2211; Price £10.99; Certificate 15
A good decade after his Hammer Frankenstein pics, Fisher returned to the subject with this effort which ranks with his best work. Peter Cushing plays the doctor, Susan Denberg is the woman whose body he resurrects. (MFB No. 401)

Hand of Death

Director John Woo; Hong Kong 1976; Hong

Kong Classics V3427; Price £12.99; Certificate 15
The story for *Hand of Death* is nothing special (a Shaolin student attempts to bring a traitor to justice), but the set pieces are executed with exhilarating verve. There are frenetic Shaw Brothers-style action sequences, and Woo experiments with slow motion.

Hitchcock at War:

Aventure Malgache/Bon Voyage

Director Alfred Hitchcock; UK 1944; Connoisseur Video CR 160; Price £12.99; B/W; Subtitles; Certificate PG
Slight but rewarding Hitchcock propaganda shorts, made for the Ministry of Information. Both abound in macguffins, ironic humour and other characteristic Hitchcock touches. Watch out for the vintage moment in *Bon Voyage* in which a Gestapo agent murders a Resistance fighter and then casually removes her watch. (S&S December 1993)

Kalifornia

Director Dominic Sena; USA 1993; Columbia TriStar CVR 26907; Price £12.99; Certificate 18
(S&S April 1994)

Lifespan

Director Alexander Whitelaw; USA/Netherlands 1975; Art House AHP 5027; Price £12.99; Certificate 18
(MFB No. 457)

Loot

Director Silvio Narizzano; UK 1970; Warner

Home Video SO38122; Price £10.99;

Certificate 15

Galton and Simpson scripted this hit-and-miss adaptation of Joe Orton's play. The main drawback is that it tries so hard to be trendy that it loses sight of the macabre, satirical humour at its core. It's shot in gaudy colour and features a terrible *Godspell*-style soundtrack. Richard Attenborough makes an appropriately dim-witted Police Inspector. (MFB 344)

My Crazy Life (Mi Vida Loca)

Director Allison Anders; USA 1993; Tartan Video TVT 1214; Price £15.99; Certificate 18
Multi-layered portrait of gang life as experienced by Hispanic LA homegirls. There are a variety of different narrators, and the way their respective stories segue into one another is at times confusing. Overall, though, this is a resonant, funny movie which captures the bizarre rituals of gang life without glorifying the violence. (S&S April 1994)

Naked - As Nature Intended

Director Harrison Marks; UK 1961; Jezebel JEZ 013; Price £12.99; Certificate 15
This sprightly piece of British naturist nonsense begins as a travelogue, with Jackie, Catriona and Pam roaming the British countryside. After visiting Stonehenge and other sites of interest, they arrive at their real destination - a Cornish nudist colony where they sip tea, frolic on the beach and play table tennis in the nude. (MFB No. 335)

No Escape

Director Martin Campbell; USA 1994; PolyGram/Guild Video GLD 51732; Price £10.99; Certificate 15
(S&S June 1994)

Privates' Progress/School for Scoundrels

Directors John Boulting/Robert Hamer; UK 1956/1960; Warner Home Video SO38351; Price £12.99; B/W; Certificate U
Thoroughly feeble double bill of British comedy, enjoyable enough if you like seeing Ian Carmichael do his silly ass routine and Terry Thomas sneer through his moustache, but dispiriting when one remembers what Hamer and Boulting were capable of in their prime. (MFB Nos. 267/316)

Rasputin the Mad Monk

Director Don Sharp; UK 1966; Lumiere Lum 2210; Price £10.99; Certificate 15
Christopher Lee is really too urbane to play the mad Russian monk. He compensates by putting on a gruff voice and roaring out his lines like a pantomime villain. His performance, like the film, teeters on the brink of camp. (MFB No. 387)

Romeo is Bleeding

Director Peter Medak; USA 1992; Columbia TriStar CVR 26753; Price £12.99; Certificate 18
(S&S May 1994)

Schindler's List

Director Steven Spielberg; USA 1993; Universal VHR 1748; Price £14.99; B/W; Certificate 15
(S&S March 1994)

Scrubbers

Director Mai Zetterling; UK 1982; Fabulous Films Fab 4087; Price £10.99; Certificate 18
Murky drama set in a borstal for girls. Mai Zetterling directs in a tough, naturalistic style reminiscent of Alan Clarke. Roy Minton's script is not up to

the standard of his earlier *Scum*, but despite its rough edges, it has energy and attitude. (MFB No. 586)

Serial Mom

Director John Waters; USA 1994; PolyGram GLD 51742; Price £10.99; Certificate 18 (S&S June 1994)

Spirits of the Dead (Histoires extraordinaires)

Directors Roger Vadim, Louis Malle, Federico Fellini; France 1967; Arrow FC 009; Price £15.99; Certificate 18
Roger Vadim cast Jane Fonda opposite her brother Peter in *Metzengerstein*, his contribution to this compendium of short films inspired by Edgar Allan Poe. Malle's rendering of William Wilson, Poe's famous doppelgänger story, is efficiently if uninspiringly told, with token nods in the direction of Jean Vigo. Even Fellini's *Toby Dammit* is a little disappointing. All in all, Roger Corman does Poe better. (MFB No. 471)

Sweeney The Movies 1 & 2

Directors David Wickes, Tom Clegg; UK 1976/1978; Lumiere Lum 2096; Price £10.99; Certificate 18
Regan and Carter aptly begin the first *Sweeney* film with stinking hangovers. Their style of policing is glorified thuggery, with frequent stops for beer. But no amount of nostalgic indulgence can conceal the fact that these are both lousy movies. (MFB Nos. 512/533)

Tales of Hoffman

Director Michael Powell; UK 1951; Warner Home Video S038278; Price £10.99; Certificate U (MFB No. 209)

Testimony

Director Tony Palmer; UK 1987; Connoisseur CR 174; Price £15.99; B/W & Colour; Certificate PG (tbc)
Just as John Schlesinger famously recreated Moscow in *Dundee for an Englishman Abroad*, Tony Palmer manages to conjure up Soviet Russia out of unlikely Wigan and Liverpool locations. He avoids the biopic pitfalls of chronology and banal dialogue by shooting much of the movie in expressionistic black and white, and by using some arresting formal conceits (it opens, *Sunset Boulevard*-style, with the hero, Dmitri Shostakovich sceptically observing his own state funeral). Ben Kingsley excels as the composer and there is an entertaining, louche cameo from Robert Stephens as the great theatre director, Meyerhold. (MFB No. 653)

Tokyo Drifter

Director Suzuki Seijun; Japan 1966; ICA Projects ICAV 1015; Price £13.99; Subtitles; Widescreen; Certificate 12 (S&S April 1994)

Vanya on 42nd Street

Director Louis Malle; USA 1994; Artificial Eye ART 108; Price £15.99; Certificate U
Enrapturing, if mannered, version of *Uncle Vanya*. There is a sense of Chinese boxes about a project in which a film director, Louis Malle, makes a movie of a stage director, André Gregory, rehearsing a production of a play. But the shabby grandeur of the New Amsterdam Theatre, once scene of the Ziegfeld Follies, is an ideal setting for Chekhov's study of a Russian family in decline. (S&S January 1995)

The Year of the Dragon

Director Michael Cimino; USA 1985; PolyGram Video 6343783; Price £10.99; Certificate 18 (MFB No. 624)

Retail Premiere

Branded to Kill

Director Suzuki Seijun; Japan 1967; ICA Projects ICAV 106; Price £13.99; B/W; Subtitles; Widescreen; Certificate 18; 90 minutes; Producer Iwai Kano; Screenplay Guryu Hachiro; Lead Actors Shashido Jo, Ogawa Mariko
Suzuki Seijun took yakuza genre conventions to extremes, and was sacked from his studio due to this wilful but brilliant story about a professional gunman. This is sleekly shot in widescreen, and between all the explosions of violence, there are occasional moments of exquisite lyricism (the gunman bumbles an assassination when a butterfly lands on his sights). There's also some very bizarre comedy, much of it derived from the fact that the hero only gets sexually aroused when he smells boiled rice.

Lady of the Camellias (La Dame aux camélias)

Director Mauro Bolognini; Italy/France 1981; Arrow AV 024; Price £15.99; Certificate 15; 121 minutes; Producer Opera Film; Screenplay Jean Auranche, Vladimir Pozner; Lead Actors Isabelle Huppert, Gian Maria Volonté, Bruno Ganz
Isabelle Huppert follows in Greta Garbo's footsteps as the consumptive French courtesan in nineteenth century Paris. This isn't a patch on Cukor's *Camille*, but it's a far earthier version of the *Dumas* film tale. Whereas Garbo coughed delicately into a cambric handkerchief, Huppert is liable to retch up blood into a basin.

Orgy of the Dead

Director A.C. Stephen; USA 1965; Warner Music Vision 8122 75901-3; Price £9.99; Certificate tbc; 92 minutes; Producer A.C. Stephen; Screenplay Edward D. Wood Jr; Lead Actors Criswell, Fawn Silver, Pat Barringer
"My monsters have done well for me," intones the hero, a novelist who, for reasons best known to screenwriter Ed Wood, is driving his girlfriend to the cemetery. The continuity is appalling (it's dark outside the car, but light inside it). After an unexplained crash, the couple are captured by evil tomb dwellers, Criswell and Vampira, tied to two totem poles and made to watch various, strange dance routines performed by half-naked women to the accompaniment of cocktail lounge music. It takes some kind of genius to come up with hokum like this.

Story of a Cloistered Nun

(Storia di una monaca di clausura)

Director Domenico Paolla; Italy 1973; Redemption REIN 046; Price £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate 18; 97 minutes; Producer Tonino Cervi; Screenplay Domenico Paolla; Lead Actors Susy Kendall, Catherine Spaak, Eleonora Giorgi
Kinky, heretical saga based on an apparently true story of a young woman in the sixteenth century who fell in love with the wrong man and was locked away in a nunnery for her indiscretion. The production values are of a surprisingly high standard for what is essentially soft-core porn in a habit.

THE ADJUSTER

By Richard Falcon

● Consider this scenario: You are walking to work one morning when a car pulls alongside and two men get out, one of them shouldering a video camera. While the cameraman videos you and tells you that you are an attractive woman, the other man persuades you to forget the office and go with them to a "glamour" photo shoot, where you are later cajoled into having sex with them in front of the camera. This is the basic plot of a (would-be) *video vérité* – a new corner of the British adult video market.

This video niche targets its consumers with great skill and deals in a range of subgenres – from cut American hardcore, to striptease tapes stating they are "sexy videos" not "sex videos" (semantics is everything in a business where public opinion generally approves of erotica but disapproves of pornography).

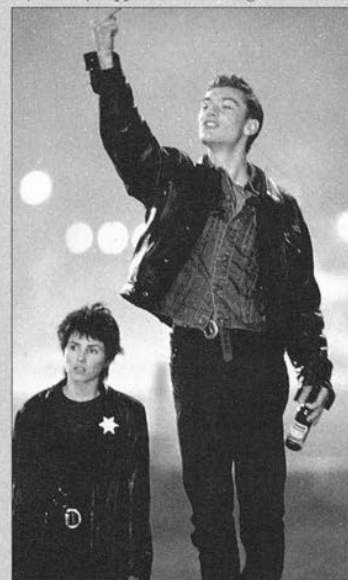
Classifying sex tapes falls at the less salubrious end of a British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) examiner's job. I could, in my role as examiner, perceive the way this sleazy *nouvelle vague* of British porn takes the camera into the streets as a rescripting of 'pornotopia' as something attempting to pass for 'real life'; or, alternatively, regard it as exclusively pornographic and in need of zoning into licensed sex shops at 'R18'. On the other hand, I could see it as a new spin on soft porn and suggest an '18' certificate, which would allow it to appear in regular video stores. Whichever option I choose, discussion has to be based on a none-too-easy attempt at objective analysis of videos whose sights are set further down the human body than the brain. Such analysis has to be (sometimes surreally) specific. It often revolves around what the BBFC has since the 80s called the "sexualised universe of pornography" – where characters have only one motivation and there is little mystery regarding plot development. The so-called "sexualised universe" is an indicator of 'R18' pornography, but what are we to make of the 'sexualised high street' introduced by this new subgenre? What is also distinctive about these tapes is the soundtrack's address to male audiences through laddish grunts of appreciation – a regressive invitation to share the immediacy of the on-screen cameraman's objectification of the woman. Taken seriously, the shifting of softcore scenarios via the portable video camera into the *vérité* style could raise questions about women's rights to go unmolested in public places. These films may be accused of inhabiting the same world as the racier and more unironic pages of the new lads' magazine, *Loaded*, i.e. part of a peculiarly British approach to sexuality. What is at stake is how seriously potential viewers take this scenario, but first the BBFC has to decide how seriously it is going to take it.

The staple of the adult video market sector is US cable hardcore. Heavily cut from the original, this is also the cornerstone of satellite's Adult Channel. The makers of the *vérité* films tell us that their tapes are more popular than jaded conventional porn because they are charmingly "British" in their approach and because of their verisimilitude. The latter claim, though, is bogus – the

women are paid models, and the 'chat up' sequences demand a consent which only someone completely lost to interpersonal relationships could find convincing. For this reason many of my female colleagues find the tapes ridiculous, imagining counter-scenarios starring a tooled-up Sigourney Weaver. Others, though, are disturbed, and the split crosses gender lines. The viewing processes of actual audiences remain impossible to generalise about – people, including BBFC examiners, can never agree on the precise meanings of films (which makes the job of an examiner fascinating, often like doing cultural studies on speed – allegedly). The reception of sex material, in particular, is seriously under-researched. It is also a form of forbidden video when it comes to *Sight and Sound* review pages.

● The Criminal Justice Act Amendment now requires that the BBFC have special regard not only to the manner of depiction of drugs, violent, sexual and horrific behaviour, but also criminal behaviour in terms of its harm to potential viewers or through their behaviour to society. *Shopping* and *Menace II Society*, both of which had their video releases delayed while the Act came into force, adopt opposite perspectives on crime, and were hyped and reviewed as transgressive films. The former introduces an implausible, post-modern designer joyrider gang, and structures its appeal around fashion, kinetic action and a doomed rockstar narrative. The latter offers a bleak and convincing tragedy about the inescapability of crime and violence in an American ghetto. The list of precedents for both approaches is extensive. The "special regard" in the former case amounted to lengthy reports and discussion measuring *Shopping* against the Act and passing it '18' uncensored on video. With *Menace*, in which the moral context was clear, the question was one of instruction, with ten seconds of detail about the use of a 'slim jim' to break into a car being removed before it was passed '18'.

● One final thing, you can now pick up a (better?) copy of *Reservoir Dogs* on video.



Censorship and the criminals: 'Shopping'

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL
Facsimile 0171 436 2327

'Boy Meets Girl' and the BBFC

From Sally Sampson

For anyone interested in avant-garde cinema, Ray Brady's letter (S&S May) makes depressing reading. It pinpoints two of the main problems that beset film censorship in the UK today: the monopoly over film and video classification enjoyed by the BBFC, and the potentially inhibiting effects of the video amendment in the new Criminal Justice Act on young British film-makers wishing to explore difficult subjects rather than playing it safe.

I saw the video of *Boy Meets Girl* last December, before taking part in a radio panel discussion on film censorship with Scottish students in which Ray Brady also participated. I am not a critic, but, as an ex-BBFC examiner, I have seen a good deal of controversial material over the years. Amateurish as much of it is (like most student work) *Boy Meets Girl* seemed to me an interesting, original work, with some imaginative surreal touches. Although it undoubtedly raises problems because of its subject matter, it is not nearly as horrific or explicit as its publicity suggests, and its general message is firmly anti-violence. (Though whether it will really convert macho lovers of exploitation movies to Ray Brady's point of view is another matter!) The film is a chilling, unsettling experience, no hymn to sadism.

In theory it was courageous of the BBFC to pass *Boy Meets Girl* 18 uncut for the cinema; but in practice, by withholding its decision on the video until the critics have made their *ex cathedra* pronouncements, the board has put the film as well as the video on ice. For, in the present climate, distributors are unlikely to risk releasing a new British film in the cinema without a video back-up. Yet without a proper theatrical release, the critics by whose opinion Mr Ferman seems to set so much store are unlikely to be shown the film to review, unless they have attended a screening at Cannes or Edinburgh, or caught the late-night "Cinema Fumée" screening at the Brixton Academy in April. It is a Catch-22 situation.

In any case, as Ray Brady's letter points out, what the critics have to say is beside the point: if films depended on good notices from the critics for classification, cinemas and video stores would be closing down all over the country! And it is hard to forget the way in which the critics (not to mention the BBFC under John Trevelyan) originally savaged *Peeping Tom*, and how this affected Michael Powell's career.

The BBFC should stop prevaricating and make up its collective mind whether to pass *Boy Meets Girl* on video, with or without cuts, or to reject it. Either way, it will be an interesting text-case for the CJA amendment. By delaying its decision, the Board is not only denying Ray Brady the opportunity of appealing against the BBFC to an appropriate tribunal; it is also sending out a negative message which may well deter other young film-makers (and producers) from tackling "dangerous" subjects for fear of falling foul of the video censor. If Georges Franju were to submit the script for *Les Yeux sans visage* to

British producers today, what would his chances be of getting a backer? I wonder! London W11

Cowardly and self-serving

From David Blewitt

Ray Brady's letter (S&S May) about the treatment by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) of his film *Boy Meets Girl* is disturbing. It is sheer hypocrisy, pandering to an often hysterical tabloid press and to ministers ignorant of and uninterested in film, to equate Mr Brady's film with, say, *Reservoir Dogs* and *Bad Lieutenant* (whose delayed release on video has nonetheless been equally incomprehensible).

Boy Meets Girl is a first film by an interesting young British director. Certainly it's upsetting; it's violent in tone and atmosphere but not in the specificity of its visuals; throughout, a variety of visual devices debriefs emotional involvement. The exploration of female dominance over a man in an extreme situation is thought-provoking, while it challenges viewers to recognise and define their personal predilections to violence. Which is more than can be said for high-gloss exploitation entertainment like *Basic Instinct* or *Body of Evidence*, which are happily passed uncut in all formats.

In the handling of *Boy Meets Girl*, the BBFC again reveals an approach which is both cowardly and self-serving. It prefers to keep its head down and merely to react to public pressures. What the BBFC should be doing is educating and guiding the British public, opening its doors to them, explaining unashamedly the guidelines and the rationales behind the classification process. It was the Board's failure in these matters which led to the differences between the BBFC management and the majority of examiners, who preferred to leave rather than work for an organisation newly restructured in the image of Mr Ferman's authoritarian views on censorship.

In the present context, Mr Ferman and (presumably) his managerial and upper-echelon supporters have managed to delay by a year the release of Mr Brady's film, to its detriment; to lose Brady his film and video distributor (Metro Tartan); and virtually to bankrupt him, since, with neither film nor video release over the past year, he has not been able to recoup the money he borrowed to make the film.

Brady is also back to square one in his search for film release outlets. So far, there has apparently only been a single late-night "Cinema Fumée" screening of the film at the Brixton Academy. How many more will there be, over how long a period, before Mr Ferman deigns to classify the video? What if there is little or no response to screenings, thus making it difficult to gauge response? Is this any way to treat an interesting young British film-maker?

And yet I fear that the Board's treatment of Mr Brady's film spells out the future of film and video censorship in this country. The BBFC will hover over the classification of difficult material, eyes cocked on the reactions of the press, the government and other protesting bodies, ever ready rigorously to apply the recent amendments to the Criminal Justice Act which came into force on 10 April.

Ray Brady has remarked that: "After the

hardships I've been through in the last year, I would make a less controversial film for my first film now." James Ferman will no doubt be delighted with such sentiments. However, young British film-makers will now have to read carefully so as not, on the one hand, to offend the shallow sensibilities of a majority of politicians, nor, on the other, to stir up the moral fervour of Mr Ferman and his new Board. That, surely, is very bad news indeed for what remains of the British film industry.

London N4

David Blewitt is a former BBFC examiner

Collectors' editions

From David Howell

One thing Philip Strick did not mention in his review (S&S April) of the new edition of Ephraim Katz's *The Film Encyclopedia* is the huge number of deletions from the first edition. Having bought the new edition, I decided to make a check before disposing of the old one, and under 'A' alone found 114 first-edition entries missing from the new edition. If this proportion is maintained, almost 2,500 entries will have been removed. I advise S&S readers to make room for both editions on their bookshelves!

Leeds LS8

Not so very Canadian

From Bart Testa

John Tutt's letter (S&S April) regarding Michael Snow and *Wavelength* serves the useful purpose of reminding your readers that Snow is, indeed, a Canadian film artist, a fact often overlooked. However, Tutt goes overboard about *Wavelength*. This film was not financed by the taxpayers of Canada. Made in New York while Snow was resident there (which he was during most of the 60s), the film was financed by Snow himself. He borrowed a camera from New York film-maker Ken Jacobs. The print that Snow sent to the Knokke-le-Zoute Experimental Film Festival, where it was launched to enduring fame, was paid for by Jonas Mekas. So it's not "a very Canadian film indeed" on the financial grounds Tutt claims.

Toronto, Canada

Additions and corrections

May 1995 p.54: the following cast credits for *Street Fighter* were omitted: Saleh Saqqaff, Rosanna Wong as Studio News Anchors; Christine M. Walton as Bison Computer Voice; Darcy Lapier, Jeri Barchilon as Guile's and Blanka's Dates

April 1995 p.29: Gillian Armstrong's name does appear on the credits of *Fires Within*; p.49: In the review of *Muriel's Wedding* P. J. Hogan's first feature was *Humpty Dumpty Man* (1986)

The following certificates, running times and lengths were unavailable at time of going to press: February 1995: *Totally F***ed Up* certificate 18, 2,839 feet, 78 minutes, 16mm

March 1995: *I Love a Man in Uniform* certificate 18, 8,849 feet, 98 minutes

April 1995: *Before Sunrise* certificate 15, 9,067 feet, 101 minutes; *Hoop Dreams* certificate 12, 15,368 feet, 171 minutes; *Nobody's Fool*, certificate 15, 9,894 feet, 110 minutes

May 1995: *La frontera* certificate 15, 10,845 feet, 120 minutes; *Street Fighter* 9,178 feet, 102 minutes, colour

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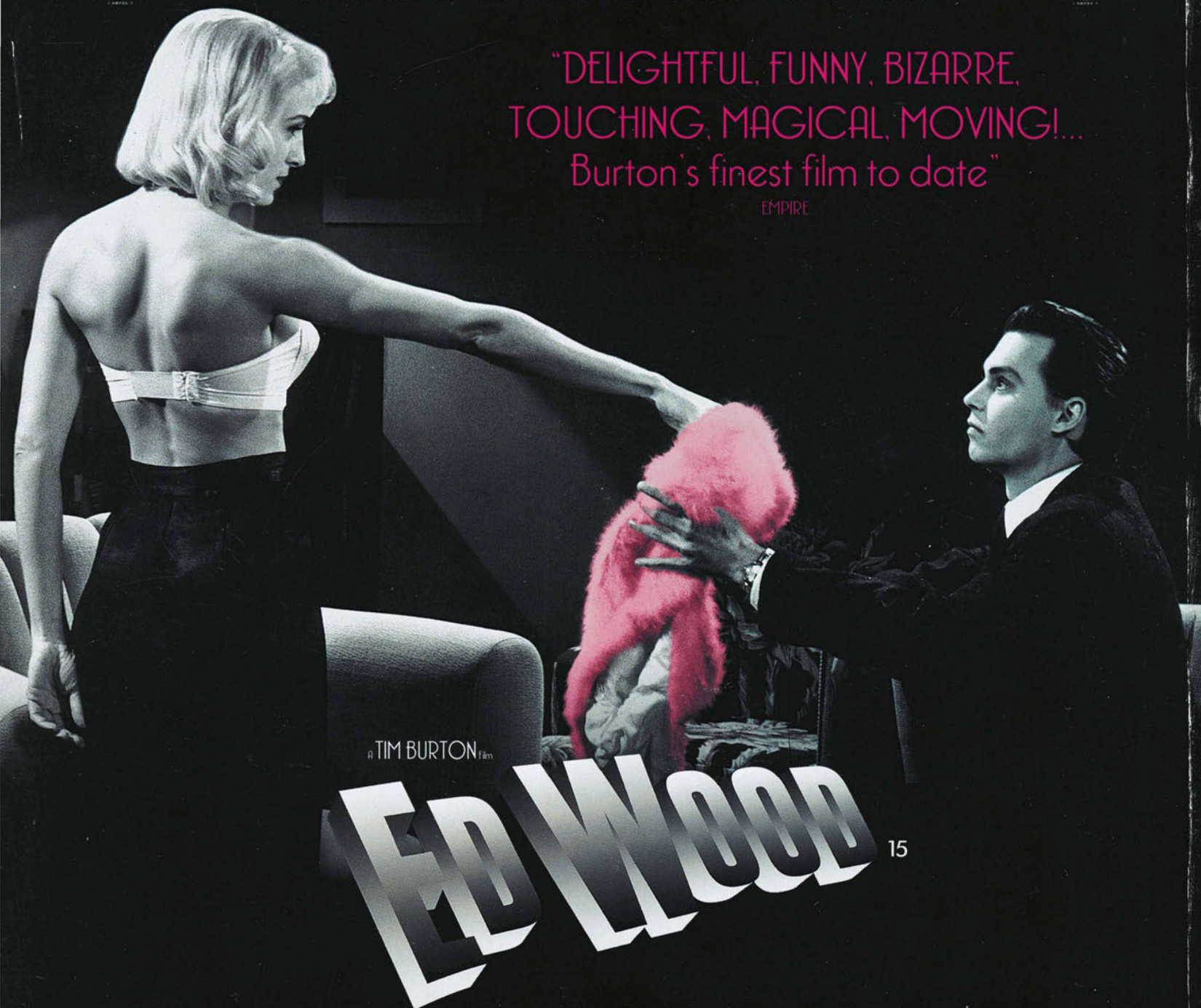
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